



GUDRUN AND OTHER STORIES



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THE STORY OF GUDRUN (*page 62*).

[*Frontispiece.*

GUDRUN AND OTHER STORIES

From the Epics of the Middle Ages

BY JOHN GIBB

WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
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1881

“ Fierce warres and faithfull loves shall moralize my song.”

THE FAERY QUEEN.

*“ Es klingen und singen von Lust und Leid
Die Snger der alten vergangenen Zeit ;
Sie singen von Liebe und heiliger Treu,
Ein Lied, das alt ist und ewig neu.”*

[*“ They sang of joy, and they sang of sorrow,
Those minstrels of old whose fancies we borrow ;
They sang of a love that was holy and true,
And their songs, though old, are ever new.”*]

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PREFATORY NOTE.

10 Nov. 36 F.M.H.
THE Stories in this Volume are taken from Poems which are among the earliest remaining of the three greatest nations of Europe—the Germans, the English, and the French. I have not translated them literally, but have told their stories faithfully in simple language, with the special design of interesting young people, although I am not without hope that they will be read by some who can no longer be called young. In the Concluding Chapter an account will be found of the History and Character of the Original Poems.

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THE STORY OF GUDRUN.

I.

KING HETTEL ruled over the land of the Hege-
lings. And there were born to him and to his
wife Hilda two children. The one was a boy, and he
was named Ortwein; and the other was a fair girl
whose name was Gudrun. The boy Ortwein was sent
to Sturm-land to be reared under the care of old hero
Wate, who brought him up to all good and knightly
customs. Gudrun was sent to Daneland, over which
Horand ruled, and there she was reared in the way
fitting for a gentle maiden of high degree.

When Gudrun returned to her own land the people
all marvelled at the maiden's beauty. "Old men said
one to another—

"Her mother Hilda was beautiful, and because of
her beauty many stout heroes lost their lives in our
days, but this maiden is more beautiful far than her
mother was."

And it came to pass that the fame of Gudrun's beauty spread to other lands, and men began to talk of her in cities and castles on the other side of the seas. And many longed to have this fair maiden in marriage. The first who came to the land of the Hegelings to ask for Gudrun's hand was Siegfried, who was King in the land of the Moors. He came with a gallant train of knights. And Siegfried and his knights rode up to the Castle of Matelâne, where King Hettel dwelt, with lances in their hands, and with bright shields upon their arms. There they practised their knightly sports in a splendid fashion; and Lady Hilda and her daughter heard the tumult, and went to the window of the great hall and looked upon the sports below. When Gudrun saw King Siegfried among his men she liked him well, and said to her mother—

“Never saw I a statelier knight than yonder stranger.”

Siegfried looked up to the window and saw Gudrun, and his heart was filled with love to the maiden, and he desired above all things to win her for his wife. But Siegfried soon turned his steps homewards, and his heart was filled with bitter anger; for when he spake to King Hettel about Gudrun, the King of the Hegelings said to him, “Thou shalt never have my daughter to wife!” Siegfried went away, vowing as he went that he would take vengeance on Hettel and on his land for the dishonour done to him.

The fame of Gudrun's beauty came also to the ears

of Hartmuth, the King of Normandy. And he began to love her; for all men said that she was the loveliest



maiden in all the world. When Hartmuth's father, old King Ludwig, heard that his son wished to wed King

Hettel's daughter, the heart of the old King was filled with care. He said to his son—

“Art thou certain that the lady is so fair as men say? But were she the fairest among women, thou couldst not win her, my son, for the land of the Hegelings is far off.”

Hartmuth said, “Father, we shall not find the land of the Hegelings too far off if we follow wise counsels. Let us send messengers to King Hettel.”

And Gerlind, Hartmuth's mother, when she knew that her son ardently desired to win Gudrun, said—

“Let letters be written, and sent by the hand of trusty messengers to King Hettel; and I will give to the messengers splendid clothes, much gold, and rich presents, that they may go with full hands, as becometh those who go to ask for the hand of a king's daughter.”

Ludwig shook his head sadly when he heard the words of his son and of his wife, and said—

“Have you not heard that the maiden's mother came from Ireland, and of all the ills that befell the heroes by the way? They are a proud people the Hegelings, and Gudrun's parents will refuse your suit, and despise your gifts.”

Hartmuth said, “Had I a great army I should win the maiden whether they will or no; and there will be no rest for me until she is mine.”

The old King, Ludwig, saw that his son was not to be

moved from his purpose, and he promised to help him. He chose out sixty men well armed and splendidly attired, for King Ludwig was wise, and these he commanded to go with speed to the land of the Hegelings as messengers from the King of Normandy. And Hartmuth and Gerlind wrote letters and sealed them, and these they gave into the hands of the messengers.

The messengers went forth on their journey, and travelled for a hundred days over land and sea, until the horses on which they rode were very weary. And the messengers knew not the way to the land of the Hegelings. But when they reached Daneland they inquired of Horand the King, and begged him to guide them to the land of the Hegelings. Horand having put questions to them that he might know whence they came, gave command unto certain of his servants to conduct the strangers through his kingdom to the land of the Hegelings. When the messengers came to the land of the Hegelings they made a great display of the riches which Gerlind had given to them. And there went certain men and told the King, saying—

“Behold, rich strangers have come into the land.”

King Hettel said, “Let them be well lodged and nobly entertained, and on the twelfth day will I receive them at Court.”

On the appointed day the messengers appeared at the Court of King Hettel. And the King and his Queen, Hilda, and all the Court gave gracious greeting

to the strangers as they came spendidly attired into their presence. The messengers presented the letters to King Hettel of which they were the bearers. Then one who could read was called, and he stepped forth and read the letters to the King. But when the King understood the meaning of the letters, he was exceeding wroth, and exclaimed—

“Your King has not sent you here for your good. I and my wife Hilda refuse the request of your King.”

Hilda said, “Never shall King Hartmuth wed my daughter. His father was the vassal of my father Hagen. Say, O messengers, to your King, that if his mind is bent on love, he must think of other maidens, and not of Gudrun.”

When they heard these words of the King and Queen of the Hegelings, the messengers of Hartmuth left the Court. They were in great anger; and as they returned they complained of the long way they had travelled in vain. On their arrival in Normandy they sought the presence of Hartmuth and of Ludwig, and delivered to them the message of King Hettel and of Queen Hilda. King Ludwig and his son were wrathful men when they heard how their message was scorned by King Hettel and by his proud Queen. Hartmuth said to the messengers—

“Saw you the maiden Gudrun? and is she fair as men say?”

The messengers answered, “We saw the maiden, my

lord, and none can see that lovely maiden without delight. Her virtue and her beauty are beyond compare."

Then said Hartmuth, "The maiden shall be mine."

But his mother, Queen Gerlind, wept bitter tears when she heard the message which had come from the land of the Hegelings. And she said—

"Alas! my dear son, wherefore did we send messengers to a far land to bring such a message of dishonour? But may I live to see this maiden Gudrun in Normandy!"

After this it came to pass that Hartmuth left Normandy and travelled to the land of the Hegelings; for he wished to see the beautiful maiden with his own eyes. When he was come to the land of the Hegelings, he concealed from the men of the country from whence he came, and what his name was. They thought him a stranger prince from another land. And all admired him and his knights. And he was brought to Court, and King Hettel and Queen Hilda greeted him graciously; and the ladies said, "This knight seemeth one to win a lady's heart." And Lady Gudrun also looked with favour upon the stately Prince.

Afterwards Hartmuth sent a secret message to Gudrun, telling her who he was, and that for love of her he had come to the land of the Hegelings. Gudrun sent back a message saying—

"It grieves me that for my sake you have come to

my father's Court ; and I counsel you to depart quickly, for if my father discovers who you are, he will surely slay you."

Gudrun had kind thoughts towards Hartmuth, and wished not that he should run into any sort of danger for her sake, although she would not listen to his suit.

Hartmuth left the land of the Hegelings, and his heart was filled with sorrow. And as he went home he pondered how to avenge himself upon King Hettel. And when he reached home, his wicked old mother, Gerlind, said to him—

"My son, there is but one way left, you must make ready for war against the Hegelings."

And Hartmuth followed the counsel of his mother, and made ready many ships and a great army with which to invade the land of the Hegelings.

II.

While Hartmuth was getting ready an army to attack King Hettel and his land, another king, named Herwig, also was preparing war against the Hegelings. The beauty of Gudrun was also the cause of Herwig's wish to invade King Hettel's land. Herwig desired to win the love of the maiden ; and he had sent rich gifts to Hettel, and had begged for his daughter in marriage. Hettel answered scornfully, as was his wont, and then

Herwig vowed that he would win Gudrun for his bride with his sword.

Now Seeland, the land of Herwig, lay nearer to the land of the Hegelings than Normandy. And Wate of Sturmland and Horand the Dane knew not that Herwig was going up against King Hettel, for Herwig went swiftly and secretly.

It came to pass that when Hettel and his heroes were sleeping fast in the Castle of Matelâne, the watcher on the wall looked down, and behold he saw armed men coming towards the castle. And he shouted aloud—

“Wake, heroes, wake ! there are strange guests coming. I see swords and helmets gleaming below.”

Every man sprang from his bed at these words, and seized his weapons. Hettel and Hilda hastened to the window, and behold they saw Herwig with his men of war thundering at their gates. King Hettel went forth with all his men, and fought with the bold strangers who had come to his land. The fighting was sore, and many heroes lost their lives in the battle. Hilda and Gudrun looked down from the window and saw the battle. Gudrun knew that it was for love of her that King Herwig was come. She grieved and was also glad when she saw the terrible blows that he dealt around him ; for he was slaying her father’s men, but she loved and was proud of the brave hero.

At length Herwig met Hettel in the fight, and the

two Kings fought furiously before all the host ; and soon must one have died by the sword of the other, but when



Gudrun saw the danger, she called with a loud voice from the castle window—

“ Hettel, lord father, the blood flows from your

armour, and the castle walls are broken. We cannot stand against these foemen. For my sake, I pray both of you cease fighting and become friends."

The two Kings heard the voice of the maid; they ceased fighting, and consented to be friends. Herwig took off his bloody armour, and went as a guest into the castle. He went into the presence of Gudrun and said—

"Lady Gudrun, I hear that you scorn me because I am but a poor prince, and am come of a race less noble than your own; but poor men often take best care of those who are rich and noble."

"I scorn you not," said Gudrun, "and if my father and mother were favourable, I might listen to your suit."

Right glad was Herwig when he heard these words of the maiden, and he went straightway to Hettel and to Hilda, and said—

"Sir King, I would wed your daughter Gudrun, who made us friends to-day."

Hettel and Hilda answered, "We say not nay, but we wish to know what Gudrun herself says."

Herwig returned quickly into the presence of Gudrun; and when the maiden looked on him she thought him fair to look upon, and like a picture painted by the hand of a master upon a white wall. Herwig said—

"If thou wilt love me, fair maiden, all that I have shall be thine. My land and my people will obey thee as their Queen."

Gudrun replied, "Herwig, I will be thy wife; and

thou and I will make an end of all the strife and hatred between thy people and my people."

All men were glad when they heard that Herwig and



Gudrun were betrothed lovers. Herwig wished to wed her immediately, and to take her away with him to Seeland to be Queen among his own people. But Lady Hilda said—

“Nay, not yet. I must have a year to make preparations for a great wedding feast for my daughter.”

Herwig was unwilling to wait so long, but Lady Hilda was not to be persuaded; and she bade him farewell, and sent him back to Seeland to abide there for a year.

III.

The tidings came to the ears of Siegfried, King of the Moors, that the King of the Hegelings had promised his daughter in marriage to Herwig of Seeland. Siegfried still remembered with anger the affront that he received from the King of the Hegelings. And he resolved to avenge himself on the King of the Hegelings by invading the kingdom of Seeland. He gathered together a large army and many ships, and when the month of May came, and the seas were calm, he sailed with all his men to Seeland. Herwig and his men went forth to meet the hosts of the King of the Moors. But the land of Seeland was small, and Herwig had few fighting men, while the host of the Moors was a very great multitude. The two armies met, and the men of Seeland were defeated, and Herwig fled with what remained of his fighting men behind the walls of his castle; and Siegfried and his men went to and fro throughout the land slaying men and women, and burning the cities and houses in all Seeland.

Herwig was sore distressed, and he sent messengers to King Hettel to tell him of his trouble. When the messengers were come to the land of the Hegelings they sought King Hettel, and told him that Herwig was shut up in his castle, and that the Moors were laying waste his land. Then said Hettel—

“Go and tell Gudrun what has happened in Seeland, and behold whatsoever she saith, that I will do.”

Gudrun listened to the words of the messengers, and she said—

“Is my Lord Herwig still alive?”

And the messengers replied, “We left Lord Herwig living, but what has taken place since we left we know not.”

Gudrun rose quickly and went to her father, and said, “Father, I beseech thee to go to the help of Herwig, for I fear he is in peril of death.” And the maiden wept. But her father embraced her and comforted her, saying—

“Weep not, my dear maiden, I will go to the help of thy lover.”

And straightway King Hettel sent swift messengers to old Wate of Sturmland, bidding him come in haste with his men, for he had need of him to help against Siegfried. He likewise sent messengers to Horand the Dane, and to his son Ortwein, the young hero of Ortland. Other heroes he also called, and quickly they came to Matelâne; and all went together in haste to Seeland to the help of Herwig. They found Herwig

in great trouble, for Siegfried's men surrounded his castle; and from morning to evening did Herwig and his men fight at the gate and on the wall, to withstand the attacks of the great army.

But soon Hettel and his men attacked the heathen host, and there was a great battle; and never were greater deeds of war done than by Hettel and his heroes in the battle in Seeland. Old Wate was much seen in the fight, and many a stout blow did he deal to the heathen warriors. Horand the Dane and Morung struck hard to avenge the wrongs of Herwig. Herwig himself was always to be seen fighting at his castle gate or on the open field, and helmet and armour were always covered with blood. Men who saw the deeds done by Ortwein, the young hero from Ortland, marvelled, and said—

“Saw you ever such a hero so young?”

Many other heroes did deeds of might. For twelve days the two armies fought, but on the thirteenth morning Siegfried said in sorrow to his knights—

“Alas, what heaps of my warriors lie dead upon the field! Counsel me what is to be done, for we can no longer fight King Hettel's men.”

Siegfried's knights counselled him saying—

“Go with your army to yonder strong place, and there perchance you will be able to save some.”

Siegfried hearkened to their counsel, and took refuge with his men in the place of strength. But Hettel and

his host followed them, and attacked the place where they lay and pressed them sore. Hettel saw that soon the King of the Moors and his men would be in the hands of his Hegelings. And he rejoiced greatly, and sent messengers to Matelâne to Lady Hilda and Gudrun, bidding them be of good cheer, for that Herwig was saved from peril, and soon they would all return to Matelâne.

IV.

It came to pass, soon after the good tidings reached them, that Hilda and her daughter were looking from the castle window, and joyfully expecting the return of their lords. And there came in sight two stately knights, who rode up to the castle gates. The gates were opened to them, and they asked to be led into the presence of the Lady Hilda. When they were come into her presence, Lady Hilda commanded the wine-cup to be given to them that they might be refreshed after their journey. When they had drunk they stood forth and gave their message.

“We are messengers,” they said, “come from King Hartmuth, he who wishes to win the love of Lady Gudrun, thy daughter. He and his father Ludwig are come from Normandy in their ships with a mighty host. They are now but a few miles from thy castle. We are commanded by Hartmuth to say that he seeks the

love of Gudrun, and that he will dower her with his wealth, and all his lands. But if his request is denied, thou shalt soon see hosts of bold men before thy castle walls, for our master returns not to Normandy without Gudrun."

Gudrun heard the words of the messengers, and she said quickly—

"It cannot be. Hartmuth and I can never stand side by side under his crown. I have promised to be the wife of Herwig, and King Hettel's daughter will not break her word."

Then answered the messengers and said—

"Ladies, on the third morning expect to see King Hartmuth and his men before Matelâne."

The messengers took their leave; nor would they drink of Queen Hilda's wine, nor take the rich presents which she desired to give them. Those who stood by were angry with the messengers when they saw their pride, and said to them—

"If you will not drink of King Hettel's wine, you shall have blood instead."

On their return to the place where Hartmuth and Ludwig were resting with their host, the messengers were questioned by Hartmuth.

"What reception," said he, "met you from the fair Gudrun? Pray tell me."

The messengers replied, "The glorious maiden refuses to love thee, O King, for she has another lover

whom she loves above everything. And men who stood by told us in scorn that if we would not drink King Hettel's wine, we should have blood for our pains."

Ludwig and Hartmuth were exceeding angry when they heard the words of the messengers, and they gave commandment to their men to march against Matelâne. Hilda saw from the wall troops of men advancing towards the castle, and noted the strange devices upon their banners, and she knew that it was not her dear husband returning from the wars, but the foemen coming up against her. She exclaimed in her sorrow—

"Alas, alas, a woeful day is near! The fierce strangers come to carry away Gudrun."

But Hilda's men spake words of encouragement to her, and said—

"Fear not these strangers, Lady Hilda, for we will protect you and save your daughter."

Then Hilda gave commandment that the castle gates should be shut fast, and that her men should defend it from within. But the proud Hegelings would not remain behind stone walls, and they heeded not the words of Hilda, and rushed out with their swords in their hands to punish the strangers who were come to their land. But the Hegelings could not stand before the men of Normandy, for they were few, and their foes were many, and they were driven back into the castle. The men of Normandy followed them; and although the Hegelings fought hard to save their castle, yet

could they not prevail; and the castle was filled with the men of Normandy, who slew or made prisoners all the Hegelings that were left. Thus Ludwig and Hartmuth became masters of Matelâne. Right proud was Ludwig when he saw the flag of Normandy flying from the wall of Matelâne. Hilda and Gudrun wept bitterly, and cried—

“Oh, had Hettel been here, and had Wate been here, then had there been another tale to tell!”

And the men of Normandy burned the town around Matelâne, and broke down much of the castle wall; and they wished to burn the castle, but Hartmuth forbade them, saying, “Come, let us be gone from hence, lest King Hettel hear of what we have done, and come upon us with his men.” And the Hegelings made Hilda bring forth all her treasures; and they found much booty in the castle and in the town, and they wished to carry all away with them to Normandy. But Hartmuth said, “Leave these treasures, and when we return to Normandy I will give you gold enough from my father’s treasures.” For Hartmuth did not wish to injure King Hettel more, but he was anxious to carry off Gudrun, whom he found in the castle.

When it was told Gudrun that she must go with the men of Normandy, she wept sore, and said—

“Alas, my father, didst thou but know that the stranger is leading thy daughter away a captive!”

And the men of Normandy led Gudrun to the ships,



THE BROKEN CASTLE.

and sixty-two other fair maidens they also led captive with her. The men of Normandy sailed away in their ships, and Hilda was left in the broken castle weeping for the loss of her daughter.

V.

The men of Normandy had not been long gone when Hilda sent for messengers and said to them—

“Go quickly to Seeland and say to King Hettel that his castle is broken and plundered, and that Hartmuth and his men have carried away his daughter Gudrun.”

The messengers journeyed with haste over land and sea, and on the seventh morning they reached Seeland and sought the presence of King Hettel. They said to him—

“Lady Hilda sent us to tell thee that thy castle wall is broken, thy lands laid waste, thy treasures plundered, and thy daughter Gudrun led a captive to a strange land.”

“Who has done all this evil?” exclaimed Hettel.

“They who did it,” said the messengers, “were named ‘Ludwig’ and ‘Hartmuth.’”

Then Hettel said to those who surrounded him—

“I refused my daughter to this Hartmuth because his father was Hagen’s vassal, and therefore has he done me this evil; but let not the foeman know what has taken place.”

Hettel sent for the chiefs and leaders that they might counsel him. When they were assembled he told them the tidings which the messengers had brought from Matelâne. As Herwig heard the tale he wept, and one could see that the cheek of Hettel was not dry as he told it; nor was there one among all who heard who did not shed a tear over Gudrun's captivity. Old Wate spake and said—

“My counsel is that we make peace with this heathen king, and then leave Seeland and give chase to those who have carried Gudrun away.”

Herwig said, “The counsel of Wate pleases me well; let us make ready to attack Siegfried early to-morrow, that he may be more ready to accept peace.”

The Hegelings did according to the words of Herwig. Early next morning they attacked the camp of Siegfried, and there was a great battle. In vain did the heathen fight, for the Hegelings pressed nearer and nearer, until at length the heathen could no longer keep them outside of their camp.

Then was the voice of Irold heard shouting aloud above the din of the battle, “Heroes of Moorland! King Hettel offers you peace.”

But Siegfried answered, “I will not make peace with King Hettel unless with honour.”

Then Frute shouted, “Pledge us your faith to be our friend and to aid us, and you shall depart in peace to your home.”

Siegfried was well pleased when he heard the words of Frute, and he promised to be the friend of the Hege-lings. The battle ceased, and the heroes met as friends; and Hettel told Siegfried the evil tidings which Hilda had sent from Matelâne.

Siegfried said, "Did we but know where to find them, it would go ill, I trow, with Hartmuth and his men."

"I can guide you," said Wate, "across the sea-path, for I know it."

"But where," said Hettel, "shall we find ships to carry us all?"

Old Wate spake again and said, "God is mighty to guide, and swift in His doings. The ships are not far off. Yonder on the strand we shall find seventy good ships, and well provided with victuals. Pilgrims brought them here from over the seas. Let us seize them, and the pilgrims can wait here until we have settled with our enemies."

Then Wate went down to the strand accompanied by a few men, and he said to the pilgrims, "We wish to buy from you what you have cheap."

He and his men went on board the ships of the pilgrims as if to buy their wares. Presently Hettel came down to the strand with all his armed men, and the pilgrims saw that they wished to take their ships. Wate caused all the gold and treasures to be taken out from the ships, and to be laid on the strand, but the victuals he kept for his men.

"We shall pay you," he said to the pilgrims, "on our return."

The pilgrims cried out in sorrow when they saw Wate take their ships, but Wate heeded them not. Hettel and all his men went on board, and the ships sailed away after King Hartmuth. But God in heaven was angry with the Hegelings, and He avenged on them afterwards this wrong they did to the poor pilgrims.

VI.

Ludwig and Hartmuth were on the Wulpenstrand, a desert island at which they had stopped to rest their men a while. And as they looked across the sea they saw many ships coming towards the island. On the flags which floated from the masts there was the cross, and they said, "These are the ships of pilgrims." But when the ships came close to the shore, they looked again, and behold, those on board had helmets on, and swords in their hands. Hartmuth saw them, and he knew that they were the foemen, and shouted, "Up, up, men of Normandy, the Hegelings are upon us!"

Then was there a great fight on the sands beside the sea. The Hegelings leaped from the ships, and struggled through the waters to the shore; and the men of Normandy sought to slay them before they could set foot upon dry land. When old Wate came on shore, King

Ludwig flung a sharp spear at the old hero ; but the spear flew into the air in broken pieces, and Wate brought down such a blow with his sword upon the helmet of Ludwig that it was cleft in twain, and the King's head hardly escaped. It was with difficulty that Ludwig got off with his life from Wate's blows. Wate was an evil guest to meet in the battle crowd, and many a man of Normandy found this to his cost. Hartmuth flew at Irold, and the two heroes struck at one another such blows on the helmets that all around heard the sound of them. Herwig sprang from his ship into the sea, and the waters came up to his shoulders. The men of Normandy thought they could drown the hero, and sent a shower of darts upon him ; but he struggled through the waves and came on shore. Morung and young Ortwein also came on shore with bloody swords. The heathen, too, who had come along with King Hettel struck stout blows for their new friends.

The waves of the sea were red with blood all along the shore. When evening came, and the sun was sinking in the sea, the fight was still raging. At length Hettel met Ludwig in the battle, and they fought. Both found how strong and brave the other was, for their blows were terrible ; but Ludwig prevailed, and King Hettel lay dead upon the Wulpenstrand.

All the while were Gudrun and her maidens watching the fight from a distance. And when Gudrun knew that her father was slain, she lifted up her voice and

wept ; and even the foemen who were around wept to see the maiden's sorrow.



THE BATTLE

When old Wate saw that his lord was slain, he raged like a furious boar. He struck swift and terrible blows on the helmets of the foes, so that one could see the

sparks of fire in the evening air. Young Ortwein also came to avenge his father, and with him came Horand the Dane and his men.

But in the darkness one sprang at Horand, and he smote him dead with his sword ; but behold, when he looked, he whom he had slain was his own nephew.

Then Herwig shouted, "Here is murder being done ; the day is spent, and in this darkness we know not friend from foe. If this goes on until morning we shall be all dead together."

Then the two hosts separated, although they were unwilling ; and they gathered around their watchfires to wait until the morning. The night was dark, for there was no moon in the sky. And in the darkness Ludwig and Hartmuth took counsel together ; and afterwards the old King said to his men—

"What avails it to remain longer here ? We shall be all slain by Wate and his men. Let us escape to Normandy in the darkness."

And the crafty old King showed them how to deceive the enemy, and they all went down to their ships and sailed away, and the Hegelings knew not that they were gone. The men of Normandy took Gudrun and all her maidens with them when they sailed away in their ships. Very sorrowful were the maidens to leave their kindred and friends, who were now so nigh at hand.

In the early morning Wate blew his horn to call his

men to the fight, and they rose quickly and went forth to find the foe ; but behold, when they looked, they saw only dead men lying on the sand and masterless weapons. When Wate knew that the men of Normandy were gone he became mad with anger ; and Ortwein lamented aloud that they had escaped who had slain his father, and he shouted—

“ Let us chase and overtake them, they cannot be far from the shore.”

Wate, who was blind with rage, agreed to the proposal of Ortwein, but Frute looked at the wind and said—

“ It is vain to chase them. By this time they are more than thirty miles distant.”

Ortwein said, “ Let us, then, bury our dead that lie on the strand.”

Irold also said, “ Let us bury them, for it were a shame if the raven and the wild wolf devoured the bodies of our heroes.”

Wate commanded the young men to gather together all the dead bodies of the Christians that lay on the sands. And they did so, and buried them. Hettel was buried with much honour, as was fitting for one who died fighting for his friends.

The bodies of the heathen Moors were also buried, and even the dead of the men of Normandy the Hege-lings laid in graves. For six days did they labour burying the dead ; for they wished to secure the favour of God, and to make atonement for their sins, and masses

without number were said for the souls of the dead; and when they sailed away, priests were left behind to pray for those who died in the fight. Much money was afterwards gathered together, and a rich cloister was built upon the Wulpenstrand, to be a monument for those who died fighting for Gudrun and her maidens.

VII.

Now the heroes were ashamed to return to Matelâne, and to bear the woeful tidings to Hilda. Her son, young Ortwein, said to the others—

“I cannot look into my mother’s face. I know she is watching to see us return with Gudrun. What can I say to her?”

The other heroes said the same; nor would any chief return to Matelâne save Wate only. When Wate and his men came in sight of Matelâne, all who saw his coming marvelled greatly, and they said one to another—

“When Wate came from the war before, it was to the sound of trumpets that his men marched, and they made joyous shoutings. To-day he rides in silence, and all are silent who ride by him.”

Hilda looked from the castle wall and saw the warriors coming, and she exclaimed—

“Alackaday! what meaneth this? They come with

broken shields, and the horses go heavily. Surely they have suffered evil fortune." And Hilda looked again, and said, "Where is the King? I see him not."

When Wate drew near the people crowded round him, saying—

"Wate, Wate, where are those who went out with



you to the war? Few have returned. Where are the many?"

The old chief replied, "I will not deceive you, they are all slain."

Then was the sound of weeping and wailing heard around Matelâne, and old men wept along with children. And Lady Hilda bewailed her husband slain, saying—

"Alas! must I part for ever from my lord and king, the noble Hettel? My glory is clean gone from me."

Knights and maidens beat their hearts in sorrow, and the hall resounded with their cries. But Wate spake to Hilda and said—

"Weep not any longer, noble lady. From the abodes of the dead no one comes back. Be comforted, we shall take vengeance on Ludwig and on Hartmuth for the evil they have done."

Hilda said, "May I live to see the day when vengeance will be taken for those who fell on the Wulpenstrand; and may I also see once more the face of my daughter Gudrun."

And Wate said, "Vengeance shall be taken, and Gudrun shall be delivered; but, lady, I did an evil deed, and I fear it brought an evil fate upon us."

"What did you do?" said Hilda.

Wate replied, "Before I went to the Wulpenstrand I took by force the ships of pious pilgrims. These I must restore, that when we fight again we may have better fortune."

Hilda said, "Wate, you speak wisely. It is a great sin to rob the pilgrims, and dearly he rues it who does such wrong. Go and give them back their ships, and give to them three times the value of that you took away. I myself will pay from my treasures."

The ships were sent back to the pilgrims, as Hilda wished, and they were richly rewarded for their losses.

The pilgrims, who had been before cursing the Hege-lings as their spoilers, now blessed them, and spoke well of them as those who had opened their hands liberally and given richly to poor pilgrims.

Now Herwig from Seeland came to Matelâne to visit Hilda. He found her weeping bitterly for her dead husband, and for her daughter who was led away captive. Herwig also wept when he saw her tears, but he said—

“All are not dead who need our help. Hartmuth must be punished for the wrong he has done. His castle wall must be broken too.”

And the Queen sent messengers from Matelâne to call to her aid all her knights and heroes. And the Frisians came, and the men of Sturmland, the Danes, Morung's men from Waleis, and Hilda's son, Ortwein of Ortland, came at his mother's command. The chiefs held a council with Lady Hilda; and many wished to make a great war against Normandy. But old Wate said—

“It cannot be now. Children must grow to be men before we go forth to that war; for now we are too few. When the orphans of those who were slain on the Wulpenstrand can wield their fathers' swords, then shall we go forth against the men of Normandy.”

When Hilda heard the words of Wate, she exclaimed, “Alas! must my daughter remain for so many years a wretched captive among strangers? A miserable Queen am I, without glory and without joy.”

Frute said, "Wate has spoken well. We cannot go up against Normandy until the years come round when the young can bear the bow and the shield."

And Hilda said again, "It will be a time of weary waiting for me, but may I live to see its end."

Then the heroes bade Hilda farewell; and she spake kind words to them, and said—

"Fare ye well, and think of me. Prepare diligently for the war against the men of Normandy."

The heathen King Siegfried also bade Hilda farewell, and said—

"Forget not to let me know when your heroes go forth against Normandy. I shall need no second messenger to bid me come."

VIII.

The men of Normandy, after they left the Wulpen-strand, sailed across the waves in no glad mood. They were ashamed; for they knew that men would say of them that they had slipped away like a thief in the night, and had not fought like brave warriors. But when they drew near Normandy their hearts were gladdened, for they knew that they would soon clasp their wives and babies in their arms. When Ludwig saw his own city and castle of Kassiane before him, he said to Gudrun—

“Seest thou, noble maiden, that lofty castle? If thou wilt but show grace to my son Hartmuth, thou shalt sit there as Queen of the land.”

Gudrun answered proudly, “I will die rather than wed thy son Hartmuth. He is not the equal of King Hettel’s daughter!”

Ludwig was exceedingly angry when he heard Gudrun’s words, and he took her by the hair and cast her into the sea. But Hartmuth saw his father’s deed, and he caused the poor maiden to be rescued from the waves in which she was sinking. When she was again brought on board the ship, she sat down wet and cold and wept bitterly. And Hartmuth was angry with his father, and said to him—

“Why, father, didst thou seek to slay the lady I love best in the world? Had another than thyself done the deed I should certainly have slain him.”

Now it came to the ears of Gerlind that Ludwig and Hartmuth were returned, and that they brought with them the fair maiden Gudrun, and her heart was filled with glee. She rode forth from her castle with a great train following her, and by her side rode the royal maiden Ortrun, her daughter. Gerlind wished to give a great reception to Gudrun. The ships were come to land, and Hartmuth gave his hand to Gudrun and led her ashore; but men could see that Gudrun took the King’s hand unwillingly. As she landed, Ortrun, Hartmuth’s sister, received her with loving-kindness, and Gudrun kissed the sweet young maiden. Queen

Gerlind also sought to kiss Gudrun, but she turned away from the cruel Queen, saying—

“I kissed your innocent daughter, but you I cannot kiss; for it is your sin that I am here a miserable captive.”

A great multitude of people came down to the shore to receive Hartmuth and his men, who had been away at the wars. And they put up silken tents on the sands for the King and for his companions, and they held great rejoicings. But Gudrun looked with a sad countenance on the rejoicings of the men of Normandy. Hartmuth went to her and sought to comfort her, but she refused to be comforted, and she sat with wet eyes and a sorrowful face; nor to any one did she show favour save to the sweet maid Ortrun.

Then was Gudrun led to the great Castle of Kassiane, where Ludwig and Gerlind dwelt. The King gave commandment that she should be treated like a queen within his castle, and that all should humbly wait upon her. Old Queen Gerlind went to her and said—

“Maiden fair, what is done cannot be undone, and you cannot bring back the dead by weeping. Be comforted, and by my head I vow that you shall be richly rewarded for all you have suffered. Consent to be Hartmuth’s wife and you shall have my crown.”

But Gudrun replied, “Speak not to me of your crown or your treasures. I hate this land to which I have been brought, and I long every day to escape.”

Hartmuth heard these words of Gudrun, and he turned away in sorrow. But his mother said to him—

“Be not sorrowful, my son. None but the experienced can manage naughty children. Give Gudrun to my care, and I will bring down her pride.”

Then Hartmuth said, “I leave her, mother, in your hands, for I cannot myself gain the maiden’s love. But treat her kindly, for she is a stranger far from home.”

Gudrun was now given into the power of Gerlind, and the evil woman tormented the fair maiden, for she thought by cruelty to bend her pride. She said to her—

“Maiden, you refused honour and joy, you shall have a taste of what labour and sorrow are. I give you charge of my room. Be it your care to light my fire and keep it burning.”

Gudrun answered, “What you command I shall do, although the task you set me to is not one that becomes my mother’s daughter.”

Gerlind said, “You must now learn to do much that kings’ daughters never did till now. Before to-morrow evening I shall take from you all your maidens. You must now serve yourself instead of having maidens to wait on you.”

Gerlind did what she had threatened; Gudrun’s maidens were parted from her, and the Queen gave to the noble maidens the tasks of common serving-women. They had been duchesses in their own land, but the

Queen now bade them comb the flax and spin day and night, as if they had been common serving-women. Hergart, who came of a royal race, and who was chief lady at the Court of Hilda, had now to carry water daily to the chamber of Ortrun. Thus did Gerlind dishonour Gudrun and her maidens.

Through this hard usage Gudrun became ill, and one could see by her pale looks that she had poor food and lodging. But there was no eye to pity, for Hartmuth was away at the wars, and no one else in the castle heeded the sorrows of Gudrun.

IX.

Hartmuth on his return again sought Gudrun, and he marked her altered looks, and said—

“Fair lady, you seem to have had an evil time of it during my absence.”

Gudrun replied, “In this land I must do the work of a serving-woman. That is my lot; and you, brave sir, are the cause of all the ills that have come upon me.”

Then Hartmuth said to his mother, “Mother dear, what hast thou done to Gudrun? I asked thee to treat her kindly, that she might feel her captivity the less.”

But the Queen had the heart of a wolf, and she said to her son—

“How could I treat Hettel’s daughter with kindness?

She did not refrain her tongue from speaking evil of thee, and of us all."

But Hartmuth said, "What marvel that the maiden speaks bitterly of us? It was our swords that made her an orphan. My father slew her sire. But kind words might win her heart."

Gerlind said, "Kind words will never win Gudrun; if thou wert to weep and pray to that proud maiden for fifty years thou wouldest not prevail. Only the rod and stripes will subdue her pride. But for thy sake will I treat her more tenderly."

This Gerlind said to deceive Hartmuth, for there was another purpose in her heart concerning Gudrun. And she went to the chamber where Gudrun sat sad and lonely, and Gerlind said to her—

"Fair lady, if you will not change your mind, and love my son Hartmuth, you will have a still harder time of it. That long fair hair of yours will be useful to wipe the dust from stools and benches. Go to my chamber three times a day and set it in order, and see that the fire is always kept burning."

Gudrun said, "All that you command I will do, but I cannot be false to my Lord Herwig, nor wed your son Hartmuth."

For long years did Gudrun serve the cruel Queen and obey her commands, and Hartmuth was away at the wars. On his return he again sought her presence, and taking her by the hand, he said—

“Fair maiden, wilt thou give me thy love? If thou wilt, a crown shall be thine, and a multitude of faithful servants shall serve thee.”

But Gudrun said, “There is no heart left in me, I have suffered so much at the hands of your mother. I love you not, nor any of your kindred.”

Hartmuth answered and said, “If my mother has treated thee hardly I will make up for it by goodness.”

But Gudrun replied in wrath, “Your father Ludwig slew my father Hettel, and were I a man, and could bear a sword, I should avenge his death. A woman cannot take the sword, but never shall Hettel’s daughter wed him whose father slew her sire.”

Hartmuth saw that Gudrun’s heart was still against him, and he went to his sister Ortrun and said—

“Sweet sister, wilt thou make Gudrun forget her sorrow? If thou wilt I will give thee many a rich gift.”

“I will help thee, brother,” said Ortrun gladly, “if I can.”

And Ortrun sought Gudrun, and found her in the small chamber to which Gerlind had banished her. She took her by the hand, saying, “Come with me, fair Princess,” and she led her to her own beautiful chamber. There was the best food and good red wine set before Gudrun. Ortrun sat at her feet, and spoke words of sisterly love to the desolate maiden. But when she spoke to Gudrun of her brother and of his love, Gudrun said—

“ I thank you, sweet maiden, because you wish to see me crowned as your brother’s queen, but it cannot be. There is a home-sickness in my heart that will not leave me.”

When Hartmuth knew that Gudrun was in his sister’s chamber he often went there, for he hoped that Gudrun would smile upon him ; but she gave the Prince nothing but cold looks and sharp words, for she could not forget what he had done to her kindred. Then Hartmuth despaired of ever winning Gudrun’s love, and he again left to roam over the seas, and to war in distant lands, that he might forget his sorrow.

Gudrun again fell into the hands of Gerlind. And the wolfish Queen said to her—

“ I have found a new task for you, proud Princess. Take these my clothes down to the sands and wash them in the sea.”

Gudrun took the clothes which the Queen gave to her, and went down to the sea-shore, and washed there from morning to evening.

The maidens of Gudrun lamented when they saw their mistress doing the work of a washerwoman. And one named Hildeburg, who loved her exceedingly, lamented so loudly that Gerlind heard her. And the wolfish Queen said to her—

“ Since you like not to see your mistress washing, go and help her.”

“ Gladly will I do it,” said Hildeburg, “ if you allow me.

My father was a king, but the noblest of all kings were Gudrun's ancestors, and I will gladly stand by her side."

Gerlind said in anger, "Go, as you wish it; but you



will rue your choice, for you shall wash my clothes from morn till even, even in winter days, when the cold winds are blowing, and the snow is on the ground. You will then long for the warm chamber you left of your own choice."

That evening Hildeburg sought Gudrun, and said to her—

“To-morrow I go with you to the sands to wash. It grieved me to the heart to see you washing alone, and I begged the deviless to allow me to be your companion.”

Gudrun answered, “May Christ reward you for your faithful love. When there is one with me the time will not look so very long.”

But Hergart the Duchess, who was chief at Hilda Court among the maidens of Gudrun, was not faithful to her mistress like Hildeburg. She married one of King Hartmuth’s butlers, and heeded not the woes of Gudrun.

For a long time did Gudrun and Hildeburg go together to the shore, and washed the clothes of Queen Gerlind. One day while they were washing there came a beautiful bird swimming on the waves towards them. Gudrun saw the creature looking at her, and said—

“Do you pity us, fair bird, that you have come to us across the stormy waves?”

The bird answered her in a human voice, for it was an angel of God, and said—

“I am God’s messenger, and am come to bring to you tidings of your friends. Ask me what you will.”

Gudrun was so astonished to hear a bird speak with the voice of a man that she could not utter a word; but the bird continued—

“Unhappy maiden, God sent me to bring you comfort.”

Gudrun fell on her knees when she heard that, and she lifted up her hands to heaven, and said—

“Hildeburg, God has not forgotten us. Our trouble will have an end.”

To the bird she said, “Was it Christ that sent you to comfort us poor homeless women? Tell me, I pray you, does Hilda still live, she who was poor Gudrun’s mother?”

The bird answered, “Your mother I saw a few days ago. She was well, and was about to send forth a great host to deliver her daughter.”

Gudrun said again, “Noble messenger, speak once more. Does Ortwein of Ortland, my brother, still live? and lives Herwig, my lover?”

The bird said, “I saw them both this morning sailing upon the waves. They live and are well.” Then the bird said, “Now do I leave you both in God’s keeping; I have no further message,” and as it said these words it vanished from their eyes. And both the maidens wept when the bird departed from them.

As soon as the maidens returned to the castle Gerlind met them with angry reproaches.

“You are indolent,” she said. “Why do you wash so few of my clothes when you are away the livelong day? If you do not do better you shall have stripes.”

Hildeburg answered, “Lady Gerlind, we do as well as we can, but the winter cold benumbs our hands. As the weather becomes warmer we shall be able to do better.”

Gerlind answered in wrath, “What right have you to

talk of cold weather? You must now wash from morning early till evening late; for Palm Sunday is near, and I shall require much clean linen for my heroes. Let me not catch you any more in your chamber after daylight."

When they heard these words the maidens went sorrowfully to their lonely chamber. A sorry place it was, and the cruel Queen gave them nothing but hard boards upon which to sleep. That night Gudrun did not sleep, but lay awake thinking of the message which the bird had brought to her from across the seas. When morning dawned Hildeburg rose and looked out at the window, and she saw the ground covered with snow. She exclaimed—

"Alas, Gudrun! if we go down to the shore with bare feet amid the snow, before evening we shall be frozen to death."

"Let us go to Gerlind," said Gudrun, "and beg for shoes for our feet; surely she will not refuse them in such a day."

And the maidens went to Gerlind's chamber, where she slept with King Ludwig, and although but half awake she began to reproach them, saying—

"Why are you here? Why are you not already washing on the strand?"

The maidens replied, "Lady Gerlind, the snow is deep over all the land, and if we go down to the shore bare-footed we shall perish of cold."

But the Queen with the wolfish heart answered, "Begone! I say begone, both of you, to your work, and see that you are diligent. You shall not have shoes. What matters your death to me?"

Hot tears fell from the eyes of both maidens when they heard the words of the Queen, but they answered not a word; and taking in their arms the clothes which they had to wash, they went down to the shore through the deep snow. They bent down to their work; but often they lifted up their eyes and gazed across the waves, for they hoped that the words of the bird would come true, and that they would see Hilda's men coming in their ships.

At length they saw something, but it was not a great fleet of ships, but a little speck upon the waters. When it drew near, they saw that it was a small boat, and in it sat two men. And the maidens hastened away when they saw the boat was coming towards them. But the men sprang quickly out of the boat, and cried aloud to them—

"Good morning, fair washerwomen. Tell us in what land we are, and whose fine clothes are these that you have been washing?"

Then the maidens turned to speak to the men; for the men spake in kind tones, and it was long since they had heard kind words; but they felt ashamed to be seen in their thin wet garments, and the March wind was blowing their hair about.

And Ortwein said to them, for he and Herwig were the men in the boat—



“Fair ladies, are there many washerwomen in this land such as you? for I think you both might be

queens, so fair are you. But if you will answer me my questions I will reward you with gold."

"Keep your gifts," said Gudrun; "ask what you will, but quickly, for we must be gone, because if we are seen speaking to you it will fare ill with us."

"Tell us," said Ortwein, "whose land is this, and whose is the castle which we see yonder?"

"This is the land of Normandy," said Gudrun, "and it has two kings. The name of the one is Hartmuth, and the name of the other is Ludwig."

"Where can we find these princes?" said Ortwein.

"I left them this morning," said Gudrun, "in bed in their castle yonder. Forty hundred men keep watch around them."

"Why have they so many guards?" said King Herwig. "Whom do the heroes fear?"

Then said Gudrun, "We cannot say where those live whom the heroes fear, for their land lieth afar off; but they are named the Hegelings."

And as they stood speaking to the men, the maidens shivered with the bitter cold; and Ortwein said to them—

"Let us give you of our garments, fair maidens, for you shiver in this cold."

But Gudrun said, "Nay. May God make your garments a comfort to yourselves. We shall never be seen in the garments of men."

But Herwig stood earnestly gazing at Gudrun. And

he sighed deeply ; for she reminded him of one whom he had long loved.

Ortwein continued, "Did you ever hear tell of a maiden named Gudrun who came to this land?"

"I have seen the maiden," said Gudrun. "She was one of those whom Hartmuth brought hither."

Then said King Herwig to Ortwein, "Ortwein, if your sister Gudrun lived, I should say that maiden is she, so wondrously like is she to our lost Gudrun."

"She is a lovely maid," said Ortwein, "but she is not to be compared with my sister Gudrun."

Gudrun said to Herwig, "You are strangely like one whom I knew well, Herwig of Seeland. But he is dead, or I should not be a captive ; for I am one of those who were brought here with Gudrun. You say you seek Gudrun? Your search is vain ; she died of sorrow long ago."

Bitter tears fell from the eyes of the heroes when they heard these words. And Gudrun continued—

"Were you related to the maid that you grieve so?"

And Herwig said, "She was my love, and she had promised to be my wife."

Then Gudrun exclaimed, "Deceive me not, I pray you! Is Herwig still alive? I cannot believe it, or he would have long ago rescued me, his love."

Herwig stretched out his hand and said, "Seest thou that ring on my finger?"

Gudrun looked and saw upon her lover's hand the

ring of gold with a gem in it, which she gave him long years before. And she in turn showed to him the ring which he sent to her when she was a happy maiden in her father's land ; then they embraced one another, and were glad exceedingly. Herwig said to Ortwein—

“We have prospered beyond our hopes ; let us hasten and bear away the maidens in our boat from this strand.”

But Ortwein said, “Had I a hundred sisters, I should leave them all to die rather than bring them off by stealth, if my enemies had carried them away openly and by force.”

Gudrun said, “How have I offended thee, brother dear, that thou wouldst leave me in this terrible place?”

“Thou hast not offended me, sister dear,” said Ortwein, “but I must bear thee hence with honour, and thy maidens also must be set free.”

And although Herwig was unwilling, Ortwein led him back to the boat, and they again set sail on the waves.

Gudrun wept aloud as she saw them go, and exclaimed—

“Alas, there is no end to my sorrow !”

But Herwig shouted from the boat, “Be comforted, my noble queen. Conceal our coming ; and before the sun rises to-morrow we shall be before the city gates with eighty thousand men.” With these words they hasted from the maidens, whom they left standing upon the shore.

But long after Ortwein and Herwig were gone Gudrun and Hildeburg continued gazing at the boat until it disappeared in the distance. They forgot all about their washing; and Gerlind could see from the castle window that her clothes were lying unheeded on the sand, and her fierce heart was filled with anger. At length Hildeburg reminded Gudrun, and said—

“We shall surely be beaten for idleness by Gerlind.”

But Gudrun said, “I shall wash no more for Gerlind, for two kings have kissed me to-day;” and as she said these words she took up Gerlind’s clothes which lay on the sand and flung them upon the waves.

Ortwein and Herwig returned in their boat to the island where Hilda’s host was waiting; for they had gone forth to the rescue of Gudrun. And all exclaimed when they saw them—

“What tidings bring you, noble sirs? Have you heard aught of Gudrun and of her maidens?”

Ortwein answered, “I have a tale to tell which I would gladly leave untold, for it brings dishonour on the Hegelings.”

All exclaimed, “Say on, let us hear it.”

And Ortwein said, “We found my sister Gudrun and Hildeburg, the maid from Ireland.”

But as Ortwein spake these words many believed not, but said that his words were idle tales. He said again—

“Ask Herwig whether I speak not the truth. The

maidens we found ; but listen, shame on us all, they were washing clothes on the sands ! ”

Thereupon a cry of anger burst from the lips of those who were listening, and many shed tears as they thought of Gudrun’s hard usage. But old Wate spoke in anger—

“ You are a parcel of old women. It is better to go to Gudrun’s help than stand weeping here over her woes. We shall soon make the white clothes red which her white hands washed for the men of Normandy. The air is clear, and the moon and stars are shining on the sea ; let us hasten to our ships, and get to Ludwig’s castle before to-morrow morn.”

The words of Wate pleased the heroes well ; and soon all things were ready, and the ships of Hilda’s armies passed swiftly over the waves towards the land of Normandy.

That evening, when the maidens returned to the castle, Hildeburg bore as usual her burden of linen, but Gudrun’s hands were empty. And Gerlind saw her, and went forth to meet her, exclaiming in anger—

“ Where are my clothes ? You come with folded hands like an idler, you wicked woman ! I will teach you better ways by means of blows ! ”

Gudrun answered proudly, “ I left your clothes on the shore. They were too heavy a burden for me ; and if they are lost I care not. I advise you to strike me no more blows, for you will regret them.”

Then was Gerlind filled with fury against Gudrun, and she cried out to her attendants—

“Lead her to a distant chamber, and bind her fast to a bed-post. Go to the woods and bring me rods covered with thorns; for I will scourge the skin off this woman before I sleep to-night.”

All the women shrieked when they heard Gerlind’s words, and they grieved for Gudrun’s misery. But Gudrun spoke artfully, and said—

“Evil will befall any one who strikes me, for I am about to become Hartmuth’s bride, and the crown of Normandy will soon be on my head.”

Gerlind’s anger departed when she heard these words, and she said—

“Wilt thou indeed wed my son Hartmuth? Then I pardon thee for the loss of my clothes.”

And a messenger went swiftly to King Hartmuth to bear to him the glad tidings; and the messenger said—

“Give me, Lord Hartmuth, the messenger’s reward, for I bear you good tidings. Hilda’s fair daughter sends you greeting, and asks you to come and see her in her chamber. The maiden is angry with you no more.”

When Hartmuth heard these words he sprang from his seat, and exclaimed—

“Thou liest surely. But if thy tidings are true, thou shalt have three good castles with lands, and sixty bracelets of gold for thy reward.”

“Come to Court,” said the messenger, “and thou shalt

find that I lie not. The noble maiden has said that she will love thee."

Then Hartmuth thanked God because He had changed the maiden's mind, and went in haste and gladness to Gudrun's chamber. There he found her standing weeping bitterly ; and she was clad in the wet coarse garment of the washerwoman. Hartmuth wished to kiss her, but Gudrun said—

"Not yet, King Hartmuth. I am but a poor washerwoman. You must wait until you have made me a queen, and then you can kiss me without dishonour. That is best both for you and for me."

And Hartmuth obeyed her words, and said, "What service can I do for you to show my love?"

Gudrun replied, "I should like to have a bath after all my hard labour. And I have another request to make, let all my maidens who were taken from me be brought back again."

"I will obey you," said Hartmuth.

And messengers went through the castle, and presently there came sixty-three of Gudrun's maidens. But you would have scarcely known them, so miserably were they clad, and their hair all rough and disordered. They had an evil time of it in Gerlind's service. Gudrun looked at her maidens, and then said reproachfully to Hartmuth—

"Does the condition of my maidens do you honour, noble sir?"

Hartmuth answered with shame, "Things will be better in the future;" and he commanded new and beautiful clothes to be given to Gudrun's maidens. When they and Gudrun were dressed in new clothes, and had taken their baths, they were led to a beautiful chamber which the King caused to be made ready for them. There was the best of food placed on the table, and good red wine.

But although they were nobly entertained, the maidens of Gudrun were still sad. They thought of all their past labours and sorrows, and they said—

"Alas! we must always remain in this land, which we love not; for Lady Gudrun is about to wed its King."

Gudrun heard the words of the maidens, and she laughed; and Gerlind's servants who were listening, marvelled greatly, and they went and said to Gerlind—

"Lady Gerlind, never was such a thing known. Gudrun has laughed; none ever saw a smile on her face before, since she came to this land."

Gerlind was troubled in her mind when she heard these words, and she went to her son Hartmuth and said—

"My son, I fear that trouble is coming on our land. What meaneth this laugh of the young Queen Gudrun? Can she have had tidings from her friends? Have a care, my son."

Hartmuth said, "Why should not Gudrun laugh

among her maidens, now that she has got them again? Fear not; the Hegelings are too far off to harm us."

Gudrun and her maidens having supped left the supper-chamber to retire to rest for the night. Pages went before them with torches, and led them to the fair chamber which by Hartmuth's command was prepared for them. There they found beds with soft pillows from Arabia in fair colours, and coverlets of silk and gold lined with the skins of strange fishes. Nothing beautiful was absent; for such was Hartmuth's command, who wished Gudrun to love his land and his castle.

And Gudrun dismissed all the servants of King Hartmuth, saying—

"Go to your own chambers. I and my maidens wish to be alone this night. Since we came here we have not often had much comfort." Then she said to her maidens, "Pray fasten the door, for I have somewhat to tell you. You may well be joyful this evening, for to-morrow you will see a sight that will gladden your eyes."

And they looked at her in wonder. And she said—

"To-day I kissed my Lord Herwig and my brother Ortwein, and they are coming to deliver us. Rich will be the rewards that I shall give to you, my faithful servants, when I am a queen."

Joyfully did Gudrun and her maidens lay them down that night. One wish only was in their hearts, that the morning might come speedily.

X.

Early in the morning one of Gudrun's maidens awoke, and she hastened to the window. There was just enough of light to show her men with bright helmets and shields moving beside the sea. And she went to her mistress and said—

“Waken, noble lady. The castle is surrounded by armed men. Our friends at home have not forgotten us.”

Gudrun sprang from the bed on which she was sleeping, and she looked out, and behold, many a rich sail was on the sea. But when Gudrun looked on the ships and the multitude of men who were come to fight for her sake she felt sad, and she said to her maidens—

“Alas, that ever I was born to be the cause of all this woe! Brave men will die in heaps for my sake to-day.” And Gudrun wept.

Meanwhile the watcher on the wall shouted in a voice of thunder—

“Wake, lords and heroes, wake! I fear you have slept too long already.”

Gerlind heard the shout, and leaving the old King sleeping in the chamber she hastened to the wall. She saw a multitude of strange men advancing, and her evil heart was filled with fear. She went back to the King and woke him, saying—

“Wake, King Ludwig, your castle is surrounded!”

Ludwig rose and looked out, and he said to Gerlind—

“Do not cry out. Perhaps these are pilgrims who have come into our harbour to buy provisions for the voyage. I will go and tell my son Hartmuth.”

When Hartmuth heard his father's words, he said—

“I will soon tell you who they are, father; for I know the flags of twenty lands.”

He went to the window and looked, and he said to his father—

“My dear father, these are no pilgrims; it is Wate and his host come to avenge their old shame. I see yonder the banner of Sturm-land and of Ortland, and the brown silk banner of Siegfried, the King of Moor-land. Horand, Frute, Morung, are all there. Look at their banners. And mark that flag, white as a swan's wing, with golden figures on it; that is the flag of my mother-in-law Hilda. Yonder banner of blue silk belongs to Herwig of Seeland. I know well why he comes. We shall fight a mighty battle before evening.”

Ludwig and Hartmuth put on their armour in haste, and were going forth to meet the enemy. But Gerlind said to her son—

“Dost thou wish, my son, to lose thy life and that of thy men? Our castle walls are strong. Remain behind their shelter.”

Hartmuth said impatiently, “Go, mother, and show thy maidens how to prick gems and gold on silk; and

send Gudrun to the sands to wash thy clothes. Ha! thou thoughtest the maiden had no friends."

"My son," said Gerlind, "it was for thy sake I did it all. Listen to my words, I pray thee. Shoot with the bow and the crossbow, and throw large stones at them from the wall with great machines. I and my maids will help, and ourselves cast stones upon the enemy rather than see thee go out against yonder mighty host."

But Hartmuth said in anger, "Why give me such advice? Rather than shut myself up in the castle while there are foes without will I die on the field!"

Gerlind saw that Hartmuth would not heed her words, and she said, weeping, to his men—

"Take your arms and go with my son. Strike from the helmets of the foes sparks of fire, and deal them deadly wounds. Richly will I reward you all on your return."

Then did Ludwig and Hartmuth ride forth from the castle at the head of their men; but they left a guard within. Wate saw them coming, and he blew his horn three times, and called to Horand to show Queen Hilda's banner. As the armies drew near to one another Ortwein saw King Hartmuth riding at the head of his men, and he said—

"Who is that chief with bright shining armour, who looks like an emperor, and who swings his sword as if he meant to win a kingdom?"

"It is Hartmuth," one made answer; "a brave knight, the same that slew thy father."

When Ortwein heard the name of Hartmuth, he placed his lance in rest, and rode furiously against him. As the two Kings met, you could have seen the fire-sparks coming from their armour; but the horses of both fell. But the heroes rose after their fall, and fought on foot with swords; and the men of both hosts joined in fight, and fought around their chiefs. And soon were all the chiefs and their men fighting around King Ludwig's castle; and from the windows Gudrun and her maidens looked down. Many a hero received wounds, and many a one fell not to rise again. Ortwein received a blow from Hartmuth that cleft his helmet, and his men led him away to bind his bleeding head. Hartmuth struck Horand likewise, and he was led bleeding from the fight. Old Wate was not idle, I can tell you. Many bade farewell to life wherever he went. Old King Ludwig was not far behind. Herwig saw Ludwig smiting on the right hand and on the left, and he called out aloud—

"Does any one know yonder white-haired chief?"

Ludwig heard him, and he replied in loud tones, "I am Ludwig of Normandy, one who fears no foe."

Herwig answered, "Then have I good cause to hate you. You stole my wife;" and with these words Herwig threw himself with fury upon the old King. Ludwig lifted his sword and struck him such blows that he fell

upon the ground ; and if his men had not saved Herwig Ludwig would have then made an end of his life. But when he was somewhat recovered, Herwig looked up to the castle ; for he knew that Gudrun was looking down, and he feared she had seen his shame. Again he mingled in the fight, for he wished to find Ludwig. And when he found him, they fought a second time. This time fortune was on the side of the young King, who smote Ludwig such a blow that he fell dead. Herwig severed his head from his shoulders with his sword. And the Norman women who were watching the fight from the castle lifted up their voices and wept when they saw their King fall.

Hartmuth saw that his father was slain, and that many of his men were slain, and he knew that his little army could not longer resist the great armies that were pressing upon it. He shouted to his men—

“Well have you fought, my men, to-day ; for your bravery you shall be partners of all I have for ever. But it is time for us now to take rest in our city and castle.” And saying these words, he led his men behind the shelter of the city walls.

But Wate and his men pressed on to the city, and sought to take it. The men of Normandy sent great stones down on Wate’s men ; but the old hero heeded not, but thundered at the gate. Hartmuth looked down from the wall, and behold, at one gate was the King of the Moors and his men, at the next Ortwein, at the

third Herwig, and at the fourth Wate. And Hartmuth said—

“I cannot fly away, for I am not a bird, nor can I creep under the earth, nor yet can I reach the sea because of the foes. Since better may not be, I will go back once more and fight. I will see if I cannot force old Wate from the gate.”

Now the strength of twenty-six men was in Wate's arm; but Hartmuth was brave and strong, and although Wate fought like a giant, Hartmuth gave not back a foot.

Gerlind was watching the fight from the castle, and she saw her husband slain, and the enemy pressing fast upon the men of Normandy. And she cried out—

“Who will slay Gudrun for me? he shall have much gold for his reward.”

A base churl heard her, and he took a sword and went to slay the lovely maid. Gudrun saw him coming, and she screamed in terror; but her cries would not have saved her, but that Hartmuth, who was fighting with Wate, heard her, and he looked up, and he shouted to the man—

“If you slay the maiden, you and your kin shall die upon the gallows.”

And the man was afraid, and Gudrun was saved. To her side came in haste and grief Hartmuth's sister Ortrun, who said—

“Help me, Gudrun, as I helped you. Save Hartmuth, whom Wate will slay.”

Gudrun answered, "Gladly would I help thee, sweet maid; but I am not a knight that I can go into the fight."

But Ortrun begged her with tears to do something; so she went to the window, and not far distant she saw her lover Herwig, and she called to him, saying—

"Herwig, try to bring this strife to an end. Save Hartmuth from the sword of Wate."

Herwig obeyed the voice of the maiden, and sought the place where Wate and Hartmuth were fighting, and he said—

"Dear friend Wate, Gudrun asks you to stop this bitter strife."

Wate answered in anger, "Lord Herwig, begone! I follow not the counsel of women in war. Hartmuth shall pay for his evil deeds to-day."

Herwig, to please Gudrun, sought to separate the fighters, but Wate dealt him a blow that laid him on the ground. Then Herwig's men sprang forward to the help of their master, and in the confusion Wate and Hartmuth were separated; but the Hegelings made Hartmuth a prisoner, and they led him away bound to the ships.

Wate now pressed through the city gates towards the castle itself. Wherever he and his men went, there was nothing heard but the sound of blows and the voice of wailing.

At length, after much fighting, he forced his way into

the castle, and he shouted to his men to kill, and he waved his bloody sword. Not men only were slain by Wate and his men, but women and little children in the cradle. When Irold saw what Wate and his men were doing, he was displeased, and cried to him—

“What harm have the children done? For God’s sake, Wate, have pity upon the orphans!”

But Wate said, “You are a child, Irold. These children who are in the cradle to-day will grow up to be men, and then they will be as little to trust to as the wild Saxons.”

Meanwhile Gudrun was waiting for the coming of her friends. Her maidens were with her; and Ortrun and her maidens were also there, and to them Gudrun promised protection from the anger of her friends. And when Gerlind saw that her friends were defeated, she also went to Gudrun, and kneeling before her, she said—

“King’s daughter, I pray thee be my saviour from Wate and his men!”

But Hilda’s daughter said, “Do I hear you asking for grace from me? You never listened to prayer of mine; how should I be gracious to you now?”

While Gudrun was yet speaking Wate came into the hall. The old hero was covered with blood, and his eyes were as if on fire, and he was grinding his teeth like a wild beast. Those around Gudrun shrank back in terror when they saw him. Gudrun stepped forward and said—

"Welcome, Wate, I am glad to see you. But your deeds are terrible!"

"Thank you for your welcome," said Wate, "you are Hilda's daughter. What are the names of those ladies I see around you?"

Gudrun said, "This lady is sweet Ortrun. Spare her, Wate, for my sake. The others are my own maidens, whom Hartmuth brought hither with me. Do not come too near us, I pray you, for you are covered with blood, and we women are fearful."

When Wate heard Gudrun's words he went out of the hall, and joined the other heroes who were slaying the foes.

Then fled Hergart, the Duchess, to the feet of Gudrun, saying—

"Noble Gudrun, have pity on me. Remember that I am of your kin."

But Gudrun said in wrath, "How can you dare to come near to me? You never gave a thought to me and to my maidens in our misery. What is it to me what you suffer now? But though you deserve it not, you may hide yourself among my maidens."

Again Wate returned into the hall, and he was seeking for Gerlind.

"Lady Gudrun," he said, "give up Gerlind, and those who made you wash."

But Gudrun said, "None of them are here."

Wate drew nearer, saying, "If you do not give me up those I look for, I will kill all these women."

When the others heard his words they were afraid ;



and one in the company winked to him with her eyes, and made known to him Gerlind. Then Wate took Gerlind by the hand and led her to the hall door, and she wept in her terror. Wate took his sword, and

seizing her by the hair, with one blow smote her head from her body.

The women shrieked aloud when they saw the deed ; and Wate returned to the hall and said—

“Give me her kin, and all that belong to her, that I may do the like to them.”

Gudrun answered, weeping bitterly, “For my sake, Wate, spare the noble Ortrun, and those who have come to me for protection.”

“Let me have Hergart,” said Wate, “she who married King Ludwig’s butler.” And, although the others wished to conceal her, Wate got a hold of Hergart. He took her by the hand and said, “An unfaithful servant have you been to your mistress ; I will teach a lesson to others.” And so saying he struck off her head. And all fled in terror behind Gudrun as they saw the deed of the terrible old man.

The heroes came one after another into the hall, and Gudrun thanked them for their noble deeds in her service. And they took off their armour and rested, and talked of the fight. Then said one—

“What is now to be done with the city and castle of Kassiane ?”

“Light the torch,” said Wate, “and burn them to the ground.”

But Frute the Dane said, “Not so, Wate, the castle is strong and good. And here may Lady Gudrun abide in safety, while we go and plunder Hartmuth’s lands.”

Frute's counsel was followed; and the castle was washed from the stains of blood, and the bodies of the dead were thrown into the sea. Horand was left in Kassiane to guard Gudrun and her maidens. Afterwards Wate and Frute went through the land of Normandy with thirty thousand men. Wherever they went they broke down the castles and burned the cities, and they returned to Kassiane with rich booty and many captives.

Wate said, on his return, "We must now return to Matelâne, and give back Gudrun to her mother; but whom shall we leave here to guard the castle which we have taken?"

Then all said, "Leave Horand the Dane and Morung to guard the castle."

This pleased the heroes; and the rich booty which had been taken was put in the ships, and the Hegelings brought away with them many captives, and among them the maid Ortrun and King Hartmuth. But King Hartmuth was unwilling to leave his land, and he pled to be permitted to remain in his father's land, and he promised to be the friend of the Hegelings for ever.

And old Wate said, "Bring him not away from Normandy, but slay him here."

But Ortwein said, "Not so. It becomes us not to slay every one in the land. Let us take Hartmuth with us, and bring him as a captive to my mother."

XI.

The wind was good, and the ships of the Hegelings sailed swiftly over the waves ; and after six weeks King Ortwein's host came in sight of Matelâne. Hilda saw them come, and she hastened down to the shore to meet her daughter. And she said—

“Show me my daughter, for it is so long since I met her that I know her not.”

And Irold pointed to Gudrun, and the mother and daughter kissed one another. Not all the gold they brought gave Hilda so much joy as her daughter's embrace. All her sorrow now vanished.

Gudrun said to her mother, “Mother, kiss this fair maid, for she was my true friend in the days of my sorrow.”

Hilda said, “I will not kiss her until I know her name.”

“It is Ortrun, mother,” said Gudrun, “the maid from Normandy.”

“Why do you ask me to kiss her?” said Hilda. “Were I to command her to be slain it would be more fitting.”

But Gudrun wept, and besought her mother to forgive the maiden for her sake, and to be kind to her.

Hilda said, “I cannot see you weeping, my daughter. If the maiden was kind to you, it will be well with her in my land.”

And Hilda kissed Ortrun.

Then said Gudrun again, "Greet my faithful Hildeburg. She deserves a kingdom full of gold and precious stones in return for what she has suffered for me."

Hilda kissed Hildeburg willingly, saying, "My crown will sit uneasily on my head until I have rewarded you richly, dear maiden, for your faithful service to my daughter."

And Hilda kissed all the maidens of Gudrun, and gave to all the heroes hearty greeting. To Wate she said—

"Welcome, hero of Sturmland! You deserve nothing less than a crown and a kingdom from me."

When Siegfried and his men came from their ships they set up a wild cry of joy. And Lady Hilda said to their King—

"Welcome, Prince of Moorland! I am eternally your debtor for the aid you gave me to avenge my wrongs."

And Hilda invited all the heroes to draw up their ships on the shore, and to come to Matelâne, where they would find entertainment. A multitude of tents and huts, adorned with green leaves, were erected before the castle; and there the heroes and their men rested and feasted for many days. All said when they saw the tables that were spread that the noble widow was the best hostess in the world. But there was one who had no joy amid all the rejoicings. King Hartmuth sat alone; and there were chains of iron upon his arms and

legs, and sorrow sat on his face. But Gudrun and Ortrun remembered him with pity; and they both went to Lady Hilda, and Gudrun said—

“Mother, it is not right to reward evil with eternal hate. I beg you grant pardon to King Hartmuth.”

Hilda said, “That request ought not to have passed your lips. Hartmuth did me wrongs which cannot be forgiven, and he shall atone for them in my dungeon.”

Gudrun wept when she heard her mother’s words, and Ortrun wept bitterly; and Lady Hilda’s heart was softened, and at length she said—

“I will release him if he gives me his word not to make his escape.”

Then was Hartmuth released from chains; and Gudrun commanded a bath and fresh clothes to be given to the captive King. And when he was brought into the presence of Hilda, he came with stately step, and the ladies praised him and forgot old hates and wrongs.

Now Lady Hilda saw that King Herwig’s men were making ready to depart. And when she saw them placing the burdens upon the horses she was displeased, for she knew that her daughter Gudrun was about to leave her. She said to Herwig—

“Wherefore dost thou leave us so soon? Wilt thou not remain until my festivities and games are at an end?”

Herwig said, “Many now look for us in my own land.”

But Hilda besought Herwig that the coronation of her daughter should take place in the land of the Hegelings; and the King consented, although unwillingly. Then were great preparations made at Matelâne; and by the Queen's command the fairest dresses were brought forth, and maidens and matrons were clad in the gayest attire. Even the captives which were brought from Normandy put on holiday dresses. And Wate and Frute were the high stewards of the ceremonies. When the guests were gathered, Gudrun sat among them, and by her side the sweet maid Ortrun. And there came into the room her brother Ortwein; and she arose and took him aside, and said to him—

“Dear brother, I have an advice to give you. Would you be happy all your life, take to wife Ortrun, Hartmuth's sister.”

Ortwein answered, “Hartmuth and I are not friends; and the maiden would never love me, for her father was slain by us.”

But Gudrun said to her brother, “If you take this maiden to wife, you will not have a sorrowful day with her.”

When Ortwein told his mother and his friends what Gudrun had said to him, some spoke against it, but Frute said—

“Love her and wed her, by all means; for she will bring many stout heroes with her, and there will be an end of ancient hatreds.”

Frute said also, "I think we should wed Hildeburg to Hartmuth."

Then went Gudrun to Hildeburg and said to her, "My dear friend, would it please you if I were to reward all your faithful service with the crown of Normandy?"

But Hildeburg said, "It is not well for me to love one who never thought of me."

Gudrun said, "I will manage the matter; for I will send a messenger to Hartmuth and release him, and tell him that he may return to his land. And I will ask him if he will not please me in return for my goodness by wedding you; and then will he be a friend of our land for ever."

And Gudrun sent for Hartmuth, and he came to where Gudrun was sitting; and she said—

"Sit down beside this friend of mine, who washed so many clothes for you in Normandy."

"Fair daughter of kings," replied Hartmuth, "you shame me by your words. Indeed I never knew the work to which my mother sent you, nor did my father."

Gudrun said, "Well, Lord Hartmuth, it is all over now. But I wish to have a word aside with you. Will you listen to me, Lord Hartmuth, and follow my advice?"

"I will," said Hartmuth, "for I am sure you are too good to give evil advice."

"I and my friends, Hartmuth, will give you a wife;

and you shall then keep your land, and there will never be another word said of our ancient quarrels."

"Tell me, lady, the name of her you would have me wed."

Gudrun said, "I am going to give your fair sister Ortrun to my brother Ortwein, and you shall take the King's daughter Hildeburg as your bride."

Hartmuth said, "If Ortwein weds Ortrun, I will wed Hildeburg."

Now it came to pass when Wate and Irold heard what Gudrun had done, they took counsel together. And when they had talked long to one another, they went to Gudrun and said—

"There can be no peace between the land of the Hegelings and the land of Normandy till Hartmuth and Ortrun go to the Lady Hilda and ask for pardon on bended knees. If she consents, then may there be peace."

Gudrun said to them, "Do not trouble yourself, Wate, about her, she has already forgiven them."

Then Gudrun called for Ortrun to come to the place where the heroes were standing; and Hildeburg she also sent for. Ortwein and Hartmuth came forward and promised to take the maidens to wife. And Ortwein went up lovingly to Ortrun and put a golden ring on her white hand. And the maid was comforted of her sorrow. And Hartmuth embraced Hildeburg, and they also changed rings.

But Gudrun was not yet finished with the work of peace-making. She said to Herwig—

“Herwig, might not we wed your sister to Siegfried, the King of Moorland? How long time would it take to fetch her?”

“It might be done in twelve days,” said Herwig, “if the messengers hastened; but I fear she would not come unless I send messengers.”

“Send them then, Herwig dear,” said Gudrun, “and fetch her.”

“But,” said Herwig, “I cannot bring her in fair attire, nor can I give her a dowry, for Siegfried burned my castles and destroyed all my goods.”

Now Siegfried was standing by when Herwig said these words, and he said—

“Do not mind for clothes or for dowry, gladly will I take your sister without either.”

Then were Wate and Frute sent to fetch the maiden in haste from Seeland; and they brought back the maiden, with a great following of maidens and men-at-arms. And there were rejoicings and games when she came, and tents of silk were erected on the sands. And Gudrun went to the rich tent in which was Herwig's sister, and she took Siegfried with her. And Gudrun said to the maiden—

“Wilt thou have King Siegfried for thy husband? He will make thee mistress of nine kingdoms.”

Many a dark-coloured knight stood around King

Siegfried. His parents had not been of the same colour, but he was of the Christian colour, and he had golden hair. She would have been a foolish maiden who would have said him nay. And the maid gave consent, though shyly, and as if unwilling, for that is the fashion of maidens.

There was high festival for many days in Matelâne in honour of the four Kings that were wedded. Six hundred squires were made knights in honour of that wedding; and there was riding and tilting among the knights such as had never been seen before. What games these were where Wate, and Irold, and Frute rode! Full many a lance was broken, and although no winds were blowing, one could often see nothing for the clouds of dust which the horsemen raised. They had no regard for the beautiful dresses of the ladies. And Lady Hilda was bountiful in her gifts to all. And all the Kings that were there opened their hands liberally and bestowed beautiful gifts. Splendid dresses, gold, and precious stones, and horses and armour were among the gifts which were carried away from the great wedding feast at Matelâne.

When the end came the Kings began to think of turning their faces homeward, for they knew that their own people were looking for them. The first to go was Hartmuth. Sorrowful was Gudrun to part with Hildeburg, with whom she had washed clothes so often on the sands of Normandy. But Lady Hilda dismissed

them with great honour, and sent Irold with a retinue to accompany them to their home. And when they reached the land of Normandy, all the people rejoiced to see their King who had been led away in chains. And Irold told Horand the Dane how Hilda had made peace with Hartmuth, and that it was her will that Kassiane should be given again up to Hartmuth. And Horand obeyed the commands of Hilda and returned with speed to Danemark.

The next departure from Matelâne was that of Siegfried and his bride, Herwig's sister. Joyously did Siegfried's men sail away to Alzabê. You might hear their songs on the waters as they went through the waves.

Then said Gudrun to her mother, "May you never know sorrow more! As for the dead, be comforted; Herwig and I will be always your true helpers."

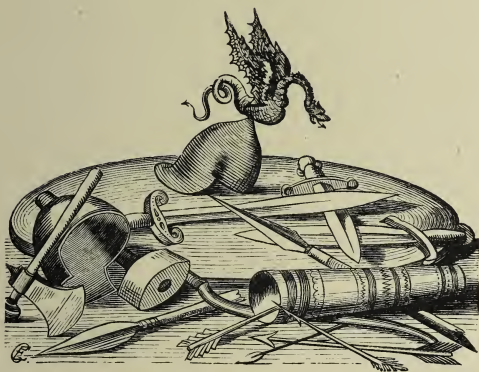
The Queen replied, "You must give me a promise before you leave. Let your messengers be seen three times in the year in the land of the Hegelings. If they come not, my heart will be filled with fear."

Gudrun said, "What you wish will assuredly be done."

With smiles and tears, and many a backward look, Gudrun bade farewell to Matelâne; and they brought out beautiful horses, the bridles and trappings of which were covered with yellow gold. And Lady Gudrun mounted to ride away; but before she went Ortrun said to her—

“God reward you, Gudrun, for your goodness to me. To you I owe Ortwein’s love and my brother Hartmuth’s freedom.”

And Herwig and Ortwein swore eternal friendship to one another. Then rode Gudrun and Herwig away, and journeyed towards their own land.



HILDA.

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America the Beautiful USA 15

New York City:
Manhattan Skyline

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HILDA.

I.

HETTEL was King in the land of the Hegelings. More than eighty castles obeyed him as lord ; and wherever he went great honour was paid to the King of the Hegelings. Now Hettel's father and mother were both dead ; and he sat lonely in his father's hall. His counsellors went to him and said—

“ You are lonely, my lord. We counsel you to love a fair damsel of your own degree, and to make her your Queen.”

The young King answered, “ I know no one who is worthy to be the Queen of the Hegelings.”

Then said young Morung, the hero from Nifland, “ I know one. She is the fairest maiden earth holds.”

“ What is her name,” said Hettel.

Morung answered, “ Her name is Hilda. She is of the royal race of Ireland, and a daughter of wild Hagen. He who wins her for his wife will have joy all the days of his life.”

Hettel answered, “ I have heard of her ; but I have

also heard that he who seeks her love earns her father's hate. Many a brave man has already died because of her. I do not send my friends to death."

"The matter can be managed," said Morung, "without the death of friends, if you get the help of the wise. Send for Horand the Dane. He knows Hagen and his people. He can help you."

Then said Hettel, "Since you say the maiden is so fair, I will follow your counsel and send for trusty Horand."

Messengers were sent straightway to the land of Horand, who told the hero that King Hettel wished to see him within seven days. When Horand heard the words of the messengers he obeyed willingly, for he was faithful, and hastened to the land of the Hegelings. Frute also went in his company. King Hettel himself went forth to meet the heroes when he heard they were coming, and he bade them a hearty welcome; and he asked them how it was with them in the land of the Danes.

The heroes answered, "We fought a great fight a few days ago."

"Against whom did you fight?"

"Against them of the land of Portugal," answered Horand.

The heroes then went into the great hall and sat down; and many a jest passed between them about ladies' love. Hettel listened to their talk, and at length he said to Horand—

“Tell me, I pray you, what you know of Hilda, the loveliest among Queens of the earth. Gladly would I find one who would bear to her a message from me.”

Horand answered, “I know the maiden. There is none upon earth lovelier than Hilda of Ireland, wild Hagen’s daughter.”

Hettel continued, “Horand, I would fain win the maiden from her father, and richly will I reward him who will help me.”

Horand answered, “No one will go on such an errand to the land of Hagen. He who did so would certainly be slain or hanged on the gallows.”

But Hettel said, “If wild Hagen treated messenger of mine so he should repent it.”

Frute then spoke and said, “If you wish a messenger to send to Ireland, fetch Wate from Sturmland hither. There is none like unto him for a task of danger.”

Hettel listened to the voice of Frute, and soon swift messengers were riding towards Sturmland the bearers of King Hettel’s message. When Wate heard the King’s message, he ordered his horse to be brought out; and leaving men to guard his land and castles, he rode to the land of the Hegelings with twelve men following him.

He was greeted heartily by Hettel, who said, “It is many years since you and I sat together.”

And the two men shook hands, and sat down to talk. Then said the young King to the hero—

"Dear friend, I sent for you because I wish a brave messenger to send to the land of wild Hagen. All say that there is none like you for the errand."

Wate said, "Whatever command you lay upon me will be carried out to the end. Death only will prevent me."

Hettel continued, "All my friends advise me to seek wild Hagen's fair daughter in marriage."

As soon as Wate heard these words a cloud came on his brow, and he said in fierce anger—

"He, my lord, who persuaded you to send me on this errand wishes to see me dead. And your counsellor, I think, was none other than Frute the Dane. Horand and he have been talking to you of the maiden's beauty. Well, I will go for her ; but Frute and Horand must go along with me."

Horand and Frute were sent for, and they came readily ; and Wate said to them—

"May God reward you both, my heroes ! You have planned for me a journey full of honour. And you shall be my companions."

Horand replied, "Gladly will I go with you, Wate, if the King allows me."

Frute said, "We must take with us seven hundred men on this expedition. Hagen respects no one ; and we must be ready to meet him with force if need be."

And Frute said to Hettel, "Command, O King, a ship to be built of cypress-wood ; and let the masts be

fastened by clasps of bright silver. And let bright helmets be made, and other armour for the men ; and cause the ship to be filled with victuals ; and when we reach the land of Ireland, Horand, who is wise, will stand at a booth, and will sell to the women buckles, and rings of gold, and precious stones. This will gain us goodwill."

Wate heard the words of Frute, and he laughed scornfully, and said—

"I am no shopman, and have no wares to sell. Nothing remains long in my hands, I can tell you ; for no sooner do I get booty than I share it with my heroes. I am not the man to offer trinkets to women for sale. Perhaps Horand will find it not so easy to get near Hagen, for he has sixty thousand men. If he hears of our designs it will fare ill with us."

But although he spoke so, Wate was not unwilling to do the King's errand ; and he said to him—

"Lord King, bid them make haste ; and let our ships be covered with strong boards ; and cause many strong men to be concealed below, who may help us to fight if wild Hagen draws the sword against us. Horand can sit on the booth with two hundred men, and show his wares to the fair women."

Hettel said, "When will you be ready to sail for Ireland?"

"At the beginning of summer," said Wate ; "when the May days come we shall be ready ; and when we

reach Ireland we shall say to Hagen that we have fled from the wrath of a King, and will ask leave to abide in his land. We shall also give great presents to Hilda, and to Hagen, and perhaps we shall win their favour."

After these things Wate rode back to Sturmland. Horand and Frute also returned to their own country. But King Hettel's carpenters laboured night and day to make ready ships to carry the heroes to Ireland. Beautiful were the ships they built. The boards were fastened with bright silver, and the helm was covered with yellow gold. The sails which hung upon the masts were made of the finest silk of Abadie. The anchors were of solid silver. The rich King Hettel spared not on the ships which were to go to seek for fair Hilda.

When the time appointed for sailing came Wate again appeared at the Court of Hettel. Four hundred men came along with him richly clad and nobly armed. Morung came from Friesland with two hundred men, Horand from Daneland. Irold from Ortland also came to join the expedition. Right glad was King Hettel to see him. He gave him his hand, and asked him to be seated beside Wate. Then went the King and the heroes to the sea-shore, where there floated two noble galleys ready for the voyage, and beside them two smaller barks. All admired them, and wondered at their wealth and beauty. And the heroes went on board the ships; and a hundred men were concealed in the ships with arms in their hands, to be in readiness to

fight should wild Hagen attack them. Much treasure of gold and precious stones was also taken on board.

When all was ready Hettel said to his heroes, "May God in heaven be with you in your journey, and give you success!"

Horand answered and said, "Dismiss, O King, all care from your heart. You shall certainly see us return, and along with us the fair Hilda."

The King listened with smiles to the speech of Horand, and he embraced his heroes and kissed them. But Hettel felt troubled in spirit when he thought of the work to which he had sent them forth; and those around him were not able to cheer him. The days passed for him in anxious care and in weary waiting.

The north wind filled the sails of the ships of the heroes, and they moved swiftly across the waters towards Ireland. For six-and-thirty days they were on the sea; and often did the sea rise and toss the ships, and those within had an evil time of it. But they spoke words of cheer to one another, and vowed before Heaven that they would stand truly by one another even unto death. At length the coast of Ireland was reached, and they saw before them Balian, the castle of wild Hagen. The heroes left their ships and went on shore. They set up booths, and displayed many fair goods for sale. They stood by the booths clad as citizens, and sold their goods to the people who came down to see them. And Frute walked about among them as master. The people came

in crowds from the city to see the stranger merchants. It came to the ears of the Governor of Balian that strangers were come to the land, and he rode down to the shore to see them. He said to Frute—

“Whence come you with all these men?”

“We come, my lord,” said Frute, “from a land far off; and our rich masters are in yonder ships.”

After this Wate sent a message to the lord of the land of Hagen, begging that he and his people might have his protection, for they were strangers.

Hagen replied, “Strangers, you shall have my protection. Woe to him who harms you! Fear not as long as you are under the shadow of my castle.”

Then did the Hegelings send rich presents to Hagen, and jewels of gold, and suchlike things. Hagen had asked for nothing; but when he saw the gifts he was well pleased, and thanked the stranger guests, and said—

“If I live three days longer I will reward you for your goodness.”

Hagen shared the presents he had received with his people. And when the ladies saw the buckles and rings of gold, and the costly wreaths, they were glad. Hagen’s wife and daughter said—

“Not often have we seen such gifts.”

But the gifts of the Hegelings to King Hagen were not yet finished. Presently there came to Balian other messengers from the ships, and with them came Horand the Dane and Irold. Now when Hagen saw the second

gifts he was more amazed. For the messengers brought cloth of gold, rich stuffs from Bagdad, and much fine linen. Castilian horses saddled and bridled, helms and coats of rich mail, and twelve shields of knights loaded with gold were among the gifts.

Then King Hagen sent for the master of his treasures; and when he looked upon the gifts, he said to his master—

“My lord, here are gifts that a thousand pounds would not buy.”

Hagen said, “May good fortune attend those guests of mine. I will share the gifts with my heroes.”

And Hagen gave to every one what he asked; for he was a King with an open hand, and loved to give rather than to keep. He invited Horand and Irold to sit by his side, and said to them—

“Tell me, I pray you, from what land you come, for never yet did guests give me gifts so costly.”

Then spake Horand and said, “I will tell you all, my lord, and grant us your grace. Listen, I pray you, to our complaint. We have fled from our own land to escape the anger of our King.”

“What is the name of the King,” said Hagen, “who has driven you from your castles? Had he been wise he would have given you better treatment.”

“Hettel, King of the Hegelings, is his name,” said Horand; “his hand is strong, and he has taken from us all our delights.”

Hagen answered, "You have done well to come to my land. Here will you be recompensed for what you have suffered. The King of the Hegelings will not come here after you, I trow."

Hagen then commanded lodgings to be provided for the strangers in the town, and he bade the citizens show them all honour. Forty of the best houses were presently cleared of their dwellers, and the Hegelings filled them. But there still remained on board the ships the armed men who were concealed below. And these bewailed their hard fate, and said they would rather be in the battle-storm than lie below in the ships like rats. Frute caused the rich wares to be displayed in the town, and the people crowded around the booths. And the people marvelled greatly at the cheapness of the goods, for never before were such wares to be bought so cheap in Ireland. Many went away rejoicing with costly jewels and splendid apparel, which they bought for little money.

Now it came to the ears of Hilda, King Hagen's daughter, what was happening in the town. And she said to her father—

"Dear father, I pray you send a message to these strangers, and bid them come to Court, for I would fain see them."

Hagen said, "That I will gladly do, for they are noble heroes, and it is well that you should see them, and observe their manners and ways."

And Hilda gave her father no rest until he appointed a day to receive the strangers, so impatient was she to behold them.

When the heroes came to Court Hagen and his Queen received them graciously. They were splendidly attired, and adorned with rich ornaments of gold. As the Queen saw Wate draw near she rose from her seat to receive the stern hero. When all were assembled there was set before them the best of good wine, and they sat together and talked and jested. Soon the young Princess Hilda left the hall, but before she left she begged her father to permit the heroes to come afterwards to her chamber that she might talk with them. And after a time they came to Hilda's chamber, where the maiden sat along with her mother. And she spoke so graciously and looked so fair that all the heroes said—

“Hilda is indeed a princess beyond compare.”

When old Wate came forward, Hilda and her daughter paid great respect to the grey-headed hero, although young Hilda would rather not have kissed him, for his beard was so large. But they begged him to be seated beside them, and they asked him laughingly—

“Do you like to sit among ladies, or would you rather be in a battle where there are hard blows going?”

Wate answered, “Never before was it so pleasant to me to sit beside fair ladies as now; yet, to tell you the truth, ladies, I would rather be in a battle.”

Young Hilda laughed, for she saw the old man did not love the company of ladies. Then she spoke to Morung, and asked him about Wate, saying—

“What is the old man’s name? Has he wife or child at home? I wager he does not give them much love or thought.”

Morung answered, “Wate has at home both wife and child. But he loves the battle, and is always willing to risk everything for the sake of honour. He has been a man of wars and battles since his youth.”

The Queen and her daughter spake many other words to the heroes, and before they departed young Hilda invited them to come daily to Court, for they would be always welcome.

The heroes returned into the presence of the King. Hagen’s knights were engaged in knightly sports after the manner of Ireland. Wate and the other Danes looked on while the men of Ireland fought in sport with sword and shield, and threw the spear.

Hagen said to Wate, “Do you understand the art of guarding blows such as you see practised by my heroes?”

Wate laughed grimly at the words of Hagen, but he answered—

“No, I never saw it done before in that fashion ; but I would gladly become a learner, if one would teach me.”

Hagen then sent for a teacher of the art, and he told him to teach Wate how to strike and guard by his art. But Wate and the fence-master had not fought long

when the fence-master began to fear for his life, for Wate struck so that he had to leap about like a leopard to escape his strokes. Then Hagen said—

“Give me the sword. I will take a turn with the hero, and will teach him four strokes of mine, for which he will thank me.”

Wate said, “Give me your word, O King, that you will not hurt me; for if you wound me in the presence of the ladies, I shall feel ashamed.”

The King promised to spare him, and the two heroes engaged; and the sparks of fire flew about with the terrible blows; and the hall itself shook as they fought, and all looked on with wonder. Terrible were the strokes of Hagen, but he found his master in Wate. And Wate said—

“Let us now fight without sparing, for I have learned your four strokes, and would fain thank you for them.”

Thus speaking he attacked Hagen furiously, as if he had been a wild Saxon or Frank. The hall shook through the violence of the blows of the heroes, and the buttons flew off the points of their swords. When the fight was done they sat down together, and Hagen said to Wate—

“You said you wished to be taught. Never in my life did I see a pupil who learned his lesson so quickly.”

And all the heroes laughed when they heard Hagen’s words.

II.

Soon after, on another day, the strangers came to Court, and in the evening Horand offered to sing songs to entertain the company. Now Horand's singing was wondrous sweet. And Hagen listened to it, and all those who heard it gathered around Horand as he sung. The sweet voice of Horand's singing also reached the ears of Queen Hilda, who sat at her castle window. And her daughter, the fair young Hilda, said—

“Whence cometh, mother, that lovely song? Never in my whole life did I hearken to a song so sweet. Send for the minstrel that he may sing to us here in our chamber.”

The Queen sent for Horand, and he came; and the Queen said to him—

“Sing again, I pray you, as you sang this evening, and come here every evening and sing to us, for you are the sweetest singer in the world.”

Horand sang, and he also promised to do her bidding, and to return again. Horand was known in Denmark as the sweetest singer in all the land, and no singer got such rewards or so much praise as Horand when he sang before King Hettel. When the night was over, and the dawn came, again was the singing of Horand heard in the air. And no sooner was his voice heard than every bird in the hedges kept silent. Those who

were lying in bed did not remain long. Hagen and his Queen also arose and went to the battlements. Men



and women gathered around the singer and said to him—

“There is no sick man in the world who would not get well on hearing your singing.”

And Hagen exclaimed, "Would to God in heaven I could sing so!"

At the close of the singing Hilda sent for her father, and said to him—

"Father dear, ask the stranger to sing his sweet song again."

Hagen replied, "Daughter dear, if he will sing to you again this evening I will give him a thousand pounds."

That evening Horand sang again. His song was sweeter than ever. The sick and the well stood rooted to the spot while they listened to his singing. The beasts in the forest left their food untouched. The worms crept no longer through the grass, but stopped and listened. The fishes did not move through the water. When he was done singing there was heard the tones of sweet bells and the singing of the choir of priests. But they seemed sweet no longer to men, because they had heard the singing of Horand.

Afterwards young Hilda sent a messenger to Horand and begged him to come to her chamber. And Hagen did not know of it, nor did her mother; for she sent the message secretly by one of the chamberlains, to whom she gave a gift. Horand went straightway to her chamber, and with him Morung. And Hilda asked him to sing once more, and he sang to her a song of Amilè, such a song as never Christian heard before. Horand learned it on the wild sea. When he was finished Hilda arose and said—

“Friend, I thank you for your song.”

Then she offered him many gifts fair and noble as



a reward for his sweet singing. But Horand took not any precious gift, but said—

“Only one gift will I accept, the girdle which you wear, for my lord would like to have it.”

"Pray, who is your lord?" said Hilda, "what is his name?"

"There is no richer king," said Horand, "than my lord." And presently he added, "If you will not betray us I will tell you all. Our lord sent us to this land because his heart is filled with love to you. He longs to find favour in your sight."

Hilda replied, "May God reward your master, if he is so gracious to me. If he were my equal I should love him willingly, for then I should have you to sing to me every morning and evening."

"And I would do it gladly," said Horand; "and let me assure you that you will find twelve minstrels at my master's Court, every one of whom sings better than I. But he who sings best of all is the master himself."

"I would gladly reward him," said Hilda, "for the love he bears me, and were it not for fear of my father I would follow you to your home."

Then said Morung, "Noble lady, all things are ready. We have seven hundred men who are true and brave. Come with us, and you need fear nothing from wild Hagen."

He continued, "I will tell you how it can be done. Say to your father that you wish to see our ships and their treasures, and beg permission for your mother and you to visit them."

While Hilda and the heroes were speaking together

the door opened, and there entered the High Chamberlain, who had the right to visit all the chambers in the castle. And behold, he saw two strangers with Hilda. Horand and Morung thought their last hour was come. The High Chamberlain sternly asked Hilda—

“Who are these in your chamber?”

Hilda said, “Lord Chamberlain, I pray you conduct them in peace to their dwelling. This is the hero who sang so sweetly. You must not do him harm.”

The Chamberlain said, “I once knew a hero who could sing as sweetly as this hero. My mother and his father were children of one father. A brave hero he was.”

Hilda then asked the Chamberlain, “What was his name?”

“His name,” replied the Chamberlain, “was Horand, and he lived in the land of the Danes. I am a stranger there now, but once I lived at King Hettel’s Court.”

Then did Morung and Horand look into the face of the Chamberlain, and their tears filled their eyes, for they recognised an old friend. And the Chamberlain saw them looking, and he knew them, and exclaimed—

“Noble lady, these are my cousins. Help me to save them. I will be their protector if you will permit it.”

Well pleased was Hilda to hear the Chamberlain’s words; and she said, “If the heroes are kinsmen of yours, they are the more pleasing to me.”

Horand and Morung spoke together aside, and

afterwards they spoke to the Chamberlain, and they told him how they came to Ireland at King Hettel's bidding for the sake of Hilda. The Chamberlain answered, with care and sorrow in his looks—

“You have given me trouble for two reasons. I honour my King, and yet must I save you from his hand. Well do I know that if he hears you came to his land here for the sake of this maid, you would not escape alive.”

But Horand said, “Do not be burdened with care, but listen to what I say. We shall ask leave from Hagen to depart from Ireland on the fourteenth day. The King will desire to give us gifts, but these we shall refuse. One favour only will we beg of him, that he and his wife and daughter pay a visit to our ships. If he consents, it will be enough; for the fair maid will but accompany us to the shore. Hettel will be satisfied, and will reward us.”

The Chamberlain led Horand and Morung from Hilda's chamber, and sent them back secretly to their own dwelling, and Hagen never knew of their visit. They told Wate privately of what had happened, and that Hilda was willing to love their master Hettel. Wate gave orders to his men to make ready for speedy departure. And he bade the armed men who lay in the ships to be in readiness. Right glad were they to hear his words, for they were weary with long waiting in the narrow ships.

On the fourth morning Wate and the rest of the heroes rode to Court in gay attire. Wate said to the King—

“We come, O King, to ask permission to leave your land and to return to our homes.”

Hagen answered, “Why do you wish to leave us? Have I not done all in my power to make your stay pleasing to you?”

Wate answered, “Our King has sent messengers after us. He desires to be reconciled to us; and our wives and children are mourning and weeping because of our absence.”

Hagen said, “It grieves me that you wish to go; but let me give you gifts of horses and attire, of gold and gems, that I may repay you for your rich gifts to me.”

Wate answered, “We are too rich, O King, to accept gifts. Rich King Hettel would never forgive us if we took anything from you. But we have set our hearts on one thing, and we beg that you will not refuse us it.”

Hagen said, “Name it, and it will be something hard if I do not grant it.”

Then said Wate, “We desire to have the honour of a visit at our ships from you, your fair daughter, and your noble Queen. If you will come and view our ships and our treasures, we shall feel more rewarded than by any gifts.”

Hagen replied, “Early to-morrow morning you shall see us at your ships.”

III.

Early next morning after mass the ladies put on their best attire, and mounted the palfreys which by Hagen's command were ready saddled at the door. A long procession of ladies, knights, and serving-men rode down from Balian to the shore, where lay the ships of the Hegelings. They found all ready to receive them, and Hilda and her maidens were led on board, and were shown the fair and costly treasures. But meanwhile Wate secretly gave commandment to his men to weigh anchor, and to spread their sails. And at a given signal the ships of the Hegelings moved from the shore. There were many of Hagen's men on board the ships, although Hagen himself was upon the sands, but these the Hegelings threw overboard into the water. They had to swim ashore like a flock of ducks. When Hagen saw what the Hegelings had done he roared in anger—

“Bring me my spear. For they shall die every man of them.”

But Morung shouted mockingly from the deck of his ship, “The sea is a wet bed, Lord Hagen. You will not like it.”

Many a spear was thrown after the ships, and Hagen's men went into the water with their armour on. But they could not stop the ships of the Hegelings, which sailed away towards their own land. Now Hagen had

many men, but he had but few ships ready for sea ; and before he could follow his enemies the carpenters had to be busy, and to make many new ships.

Hettel was still in his own land awaiting the return of those whom he sent across the seas to win for him fair Hilda. One day there came to him a messenger who said—

“Lord Hettel, Wate and his men are returning from Ireland, and on board their ships is the fair Princess Hilda whom you love.”

“Dear messenger,” said Hettel, “if you are speaking truth, and are not deceiving me, you shall have yellow gold as reward for the good news you have brought me.”

“The news is true,” said the messenger, “for I saw the maiden.”

Then did the young King bestow a splendid reward upon the messenger ; and he hastily collected a band of men and rode towards the shore where he heard the heroes were to be found. They had left their ships, and had erected tents upon the sands. And Hettel rode in haste to where Wate and Frute stood. The young King embraced them, and kissed them, saying—

“Dear messengers, I had many anxious days when you were absent. I often feared that you were all prisoners in wild Hagen’s dungeons.”

Wate said, “We suffered no harm ; yet is Hagen a terrible hero, such an one as I never saw before. But

fortune gave us a favourable hour, and we have brought you—I am speaking nothing but the truth—the fairest maiden in the whole earth.”

Then was Hettel conducted to the place where fair Hilda was, and when they saw her, Hettel and his men dismounted and stood on the grass. Twenty fair maidens clad in fine silk and in fair white linen accompanied the maiden of Ireland. And Hettel was filled with joy when he saw her, and he embraced her. He also greeted all the maidens who were with her, especially one named Hildeburg, who was a friend of Hilda’s mother, and who came from Portugal. Hilda was filled with joy when she saw her lover, and she forgot all her cares and fears.

IV.

That night did the heroes spend in the tents which had been put up by the sea-shore. In the early morning Horand the Dane left his tent and looked across the sea ; and he saw a sail with a cross on it, and figures inscribed upon it. Horand knew well whose sail it was. And soon was there much shouting and buckling on of armour throughout the camp of the Hege-lings, for they knew that wild Hagen and his men were near.

Hettel shouted, “Arm, arm, my men! You shall

have gold as much as you like for your reward if you gain the victory to-day."

Terrible was the fight that raged by the seaside. Wild Hagen and his men came out of their ships; and Hagen fought at the head of his men, and Hettel and his men fought against them. The waters of the sea were soon red with blood. But although the Hege-lings fought with all their strength, Hagen and his men made their way through the waves to land. In the battle-storm Hettel met his father-in-law Hagen face to face, and they fought. Men wondered that the young King was able to stand for a moment against wild Hagen; but Hettel fought with manful strength. Bitterly did Hilda weep when one told her that her father was slaying her lover. At length Hettel received a wound from the hand of Hagen; but the other heroes, Wate, Morung, and Irold, saved the young King from death. All men wondered when they saw the deeds of Hagen. Wherever he went he broke the ranks of the Hegelings, and they fell in crowds before him. None could stand before him until Wate crossed his path. Then Hagen struck a furious blow with his spear on the shield of Wate, but the spear broke, and Wate's shield was untouched. But again Hagen struck Wate, and this time on the helmet, and the blood flowed from Wate's face. But Wate paid him back with a blow that struck fire from his helmet, and almost deprived him of his senses.

While they fought a voice exclaimed, saying, "By your honour, Hagen, let there be an end to this hatred and strife."

The voice was that of Hettel, who was come, because Hilda bade him, to save her father from Wate.

But Hagen answered in wrath, "Who speaks to me of peace?"

Hettel replied, "I am Hettel, the Prince of the Hegelings, whose dear friends made such a long journey to bring back fair Hilda."

Hagen listened to Hettel's words, and his anger ceased. And he said—

"You were no wild robbers after all. Those were pretty tricks, I confess, by which you won my daughter. I will forgive you."

Hettel and Hagen were then reconciled, and peace was proclaimed throughout the land, and the knights unbound their armour and rested. But Hagen was bleeding with wounds, and so were many knights; and when King Hettel saw it he sent for Wate, who knew how to heal, for a wild woman had taught him the art. Wate came with a good root in his hand, and a box containing plaster. Hilda fell on her knees before him and said—

"Heal, I pray you, my father, and these knights of his lying on the ground. Forget not to heal the Hegelings likewise, whose blood has wetted the sand like rain."

But Wate said, "I will not heal those strangers,

at least until I know that they have become our friends."

Hilda said, "Alas! I dare not go to my father to speak to him, I have so greatly offended him. He would turn away from me if I went to him."

But one went and said to Hagen, "Lord Hagen, your daughter Hilda wishes to bring you help for your wounds, but she fears to come to you lest you are displeased with her."

Hagen said, "Bid her come hither. In this strange land it will be sweet to see my daughter again."

Then did Horand and Frute take Hilda by the hand, and they led her to her father. Hildeburg alone of her maidens went with her. When Hagen saw his daughter and Hildeburg coming towards him, he sprang up from his seat and exclaimed—

"Welcome, my fair daughter. Right glad am I to see you once more."

But Hagen would not allow the maidens to see his wounds, and they went aside while Wate bound Hagen's wounds. One could see that Wate loved not the task of helping Hagen; but he applied herbs and roots to the wounds, and bound them up. When Hilda returned to her father he was well again. And Wate went to the help of Hettel, and of the other bleeding knights.

After this Hettel invited Hagen to come and view his land and his people. Hagen was not willing, but afterwards he consented and went; and he was well

pleased when he saw what a great kingdom belonged to the King of the Hegelings.

He then gave consent willingly for his daughter Hilda to wed King Hettel. With great honour did the lovely maiden sit in the bride's seat on the wedding-day. She gained the love and admiration of all who saw her. Five hundred knights put on their knightly armour on that day. Frute the Dane acted as High Chamberlain; and it was a busy day for him. After the wedding there were great festivities, and many knightly sports took place.

When they were finished Hagen made ready to depart to his own land. He embraced Hildeburg, and said to her—

“Watch over my child Hilda. You are faithful.”

And he sent for the other maidens of Hilda and bade them be faithful. And he said to Hettel—

“Be kind, I pray you, to these children, for they are far from home.”

Then Hagen kissed his daughter, and bade her farewell, saying—

“Wear your crown so that I and your mother shall never hear it said that you are hated by any one.”

Hagen sailed back in his ships to Balian, and he never saw the land of the Hegelings any more. When he was returned to his own land the Queen Hilda came to meet him, and he told all that had taken place, and he said—

"We could not have done better with my daughter. Had I many daughters I would send them all to the Hegelings."

Then did Queen Hilda give thanks to the all-ruling Christ for His goodness to her daughter.

But Hagen said, "Be comforted as to land and people. Never did our daughter wear such glorious attire here as she does now in the land of the Hegelings. There let her remain. But many a good knight fell and many a coat of mail was pierced for her sake."



WILD HAGEN

WILD HAGEN.

I.

SIEGEBAND, King of Ireland, sat beneath the shade of a cedar-tree on the steps before his great hall. Beside him sat his wife Ute. Now King Siegebant loved his wife Ute and their boy Hagen beyond everything else in the world, and he seldom cared to leave her side. On this day Queen Ute looked up into her husband's face and said to him—

“Siegebant, there is a burden upon my heart.”

Siegebant answered, “Tell me what is your grief, Ute, that I may take it away.”

Ute said, “No king in all the world rules over such wide lands as you do, nor has any king so many strong castles as the King of Ireland. Treasures of gold and silver such as no king has are yours.”

“Do any of these things grieve you?” said Siegebant.

“No,” answered Ute; “but if you will not be angry I will tell you all that is in my heart. It grieves me to see you so seldom among your heroes. When I was yet a maiden, and lived at my father's Court in Scotland,

I saw his men contending daily in the lists for prizes, and engaging in friendly contests. Here these are not, and I fear men will not honour you. A rich king who has great treasures ought to share them with his heroes. They need gifts to heal the sore wounds which they bring with them out of the battle-storm."

The King replied, "Ute, I fear you scorn me. But say on; you will find me a ready learner in the ways of noble princes, if you will be my teacher."

Ute was glad, and she said, "Send messengers throughout the land, and summon all to come to your castle; and offer much treasure to those who overcome in the lists. I will send messengers to Scotland, and will invite my friends and kindred to come likewise."

The King answered, "I will follow your counsel. You women do love gaieties, and I will not refuse to give you pleasure. Your friends and mine shall both be asked to come."

Messengers were sent throughout the length and breadth of the land to invite all to assemble at King Siegebund's Court, there to amuse themselves in the spring days which had come after the winter cold. By the King's command great preparations were made to receive coming guests. Many trees of the forest fell beneath the axe, that there might be seats enough for the guests to sit upon when beholding the sports.

II.

When the day appointed arrived, you might have seen horsemen without number riding from every quarter towards the Court of King Siegebund. They were eighty thousand the guests who assembled on that day. Garments of all kinds were brought from the King's rich stores, that every guest might be clothed to his liking. Swords and shields were also given by the rich King to his guests, and many good Irish horses. Queen Ute clad the ladies in gay and rich clothing, and bade them sit beside her at the castle windows that they might view the sports, and the contests of the heroes.

When all things were ready, those who were to contend for the prizes entered the lists, and there was much riding and fighting in presence of the fair ladies. Afterwards were the heroes brought into the presence of the Queen, who bestowed many a fair gift upon the victors. Right pleased were the guests with the entertainment they got, and for nine days did the sports and the festivities continue.

On the tenth morning there was a change on all faces, and the voice of weeping and wailing was heard instead of joyous shoutings.

It happened on this wise. Hagen, the only child of Siegebund and Ute, although only seven years old, did not love to sit among the women. He was a boy of a

bold spirit, and loved the sight of sword and lance, and often did he ask to be clothed in mail like the knights. Hagen was not sitting by his mother at the window, but was on the field where the sports were going on. One fair maiden led him by the hand, and a multitude of other women attended him, whose charge it was to watch over him. Presently there arose near the place where the King sat the sound of laughter and of loud shouting. One of great skill had entered the lists, and all were admiring him. The multitude crowded towards the place that they might see his deeds ; and the women who had care of young Hagen followed the others. They forgot the boy, who was left standing beside the fair young maiden who led him by the hand. Sad was the fate that then overtook young Hagen. Alas for Siegebald and Ute ! The evil one sent a messenger to cause desolation. A wild griffin who was watching the field from afar, suddenly pounced down, and seizing the boy, tore him from the maiden, and bore him off in his claws. Swiftly did the wild bird fly through the air until it disappeared in the distance.

There arose wailing and lamentation among all the people. The sports and the rejoicings came to an end. King Siegebald himself wept till the tears rolled down his cheeks for the loss of his child. But Ute, his noble wife, rebuked him, saying—

“Cease your lamentations, my Lord. Death cometh to all, for so has Heaven appointed.”

All the guests wished to depart immediately to their homes, for they knew that the hearts of the King and Queen were sad, and that they could no longer look upon joyous sports. But Queen Ute would not suffer it, but said to them—

“Not yet, noble heroes, may you leave our land. We have still many gifts to offer you, and you must not scorn them.”

Then by the Queen's command there were brought forth many presents for her guests. Gold and silver and costly attire were given to the men. Horses of Ireland and harness covered with gold and silver were also among the gifts. Nor did the ladies fare worse. They departed from Queen Ute's Court laden with rich gifts, and clad in robes of the fairest and richest cloth. She was a generous Queen, Ute, and loved to open her hand.

III.

Meanwhile the griffin was carrying young Hagen through the air in its claws. It carried him for a long distance over land and sea, but at last alighted on a lonely island where it had its nest and its young ones. It had brought Hagen so far to feed the young ones with his flesh. And it dropped him into the nest, in the midst of the young griffins. Soon would he have been devoured there, for the young griffins were fierce



and greedy, but one, more greedy than the others, and desiring to have Hagen all to itself, seized him and sprang out of the nest holding him in its claws. The young griffin could not as yet fly, and it

lighted upon a branch of a tree which was too slender to bear its weight. It broke, and the young griffin fell to the ground. By this fall it lost its hold

upon young Hagen, and he managed to escape from it and to hide himself among the bushes.

He wandered among the bushes for a long time weary and very hungry. Nowhere did he see traces of men. At length he came to a mountain, and on the mountain-side was a narrow opening. He crept in at that opening, and after a little he found himself in a cave. When he stood up in the cave, behold, he saw before him three fair maidens. Hagen was glad, but the maidens were sore afraid ; for they thought he was an awful dwarf, or a sea monster come to devour them.

They cried out in their fear, " Why do you come to us? God in heaven has given us this cave for our refuge and our dwelling-place. Begone to the wild sea, and there seek your mates."

" Why speak to me thus? " said Hagen ; " I am no sea monster, but a Christian boy, and of Christian parents was I born. The griffin brought me hither. Permit me, I beseech you, to abide with you in this cave."

As soon as the maidens knew that Hagen was a Christian like themselves they were afraid of him no longer, and they spake kindly to him, saying—

" We are the daughters of kings, but the wild griffins bore us over the seas to this desolate place."

Hagen said, " Pray, can you give me anything to eat? I am very hungry. For three days have I eaten nothing, for the griffin carried me for hundreds of miles over the seas."

One of the maidens answered, "Our butlers do not often come to us in this place. But you shall have what we can give you."

They gave to Hagen wild roots and herbs which they had gathered in the woods. Strange food it was to him, but he ate it gladly, for he was very hungry.

IV.

Hagen abode for a long time in the cave with the maidens. They were glad to have him with them, for he was brave and strong, and he rendered them many services. But the days passed wearily. They dared not venture far from the cave, lest the fierce griffins should pounce down upon them. One day as they looked forth from the cave, behold, there were ships upon the sea, and they were tossing upon the wild waves, for it was a great storm. Then they saw the ships dashed upon the rocks and broken, and they could see that those on board were drowned in the waters. The maidens lifted up their voices and wept.

On the shore lay many dead men. Hagen stole down to the sands to see if perchance he could find any victuals that had been in the ships. Now the ships belonged to pilgrims, and those on board had been in the Holy Land. Hagen saw a dead man lying upon the sand who was clad in armour, and beside him lay a

sword and a bow. Quickly did Hagen take the armour off the dead man, and he clad himself with it. He also armed himself with the dead man's sword and bow. He had no sooner done this than he heard above him a noise as of a rushing wind, and he looked upwards, and behold, one of the old griffins descending upon him. It was too late to flee to the cave for refuge, for it was far distant. But although Hagen was young there was a brave heart in the boy. And he grasped the bow, and shot first one and then another arrow at the descending griffin. But the arrows, although they struck it, did not pierce the scales of the griffin. Down it came upon Hagen, and he drew his sword and fought with it. For some time it seemed that the griffin would kill the boy, but at length he struck at its wing, and it rolled upon the sand wounded. Hagen then rushed upon it, and smote it many blows until it died.

The danger was not at an end, for soon the other griffin came swiftly through the air and pounced down upon Hagen to avenge the death of its mate. Again Hagen took the sword and fought, and the second griffin also was slain by him.

He hastened back in joy to the cave, and he shouted aloud to the maidens, "Come forth into the sunlight without fear. The griffins which you feared are now dead. I slew them with my sword."

The maidens came forth gladly at his call; and they

kissed the brave young hero who had freed them from danger, and gave him thanks.

V.

They now feared the griffins no more, and Hagen wandered freely over the island. He explored the woods, and wandered by the sea-shore, sometimes alone, and sometimes in company with the maidens. He was swift of foot as a panther, and no living creature that trod the earth could escape him when he gave it chase. With his bow he shot with so true an aim that he brought down whatever bird he wished. When he went to the shore he amused himself by watching the scaly fishes, and sometimes he caught them for sport. He could not eat them, for there was no fire in the cave on which food could be cooked.

One day Hagen went into the forest where the wild beasts had their dwelling-place. There rushed upon him a monster of fearful aspect, and it sought to devour him. But Hagen drew his sword and attacked it, and soon the monster lay dead upon the ground. Hagen drank a deep draught of the blood of the monster, and presently he was filled with new strength, and with wisdom. He took off the skin, and clad himself with it, and returned to the cave bearing with him a portion of the flesh of the wild monster.

He meant that the maidens should have better fare than the roots and berries of the wood. But there was as yet no fire in the cave, and they knew not how to cook the flesh. There was wood in plenty, and young Hagen kindled a fire by striking sparks from the hard rock. Then was the flesh cooked upon the fire, and they all partook of it. Wondrously were the maidens strengthened by the new food. They became again fresh and fair, as they were when they lived at the Courts of their fathers.

In Hagen there now dwelt the strength of twelve men, and he brought plenty of food to the cave, so that the maidens wanted for nothing. But they were often sad notwithstanding, for they mourned that it was their fate to abide in the desert island, and not to see their homes any more. They suffered Hagen to lead them to the sea-shore, though they were ashamed to go, so thinly were they clad, and with him they watched the sea to discover if perhaps a sail was visible upon it.

Many days did they observe the sea, and saw nothing; but at last one day Hagen saw a ship heavily laden passing the island. He raised his voice and shouted aloud so that those on board heard him. They looked, and behold, they saw off the shore strange creatures which they took to be mermaids. Great fear fell upon all in the ship, and the Count of Carady, who commanded, said to the steersman—

“Go not near the land, for these are evil creatures who seek to lure us to destruction.”

Hagen shouted again, “For God’s sake help us! for Christ’s sake bear us away from this desolate shore!”

When those on board the ship heard Hagen name the name of Christ they were moved, for they were pilgrims, and they wished to help him.

The Count of Carady, who commanded the ship, sprang into a boat and made towards the shore that he might have a nearer view of the strange creatures. As he drew near he exclaimed—

“If these are mermaids, or evil creatures, never were the evil so fair and gentle.”

He who steered the boat said, “If you are baptized, how came you to this desolate place?”

They answered, “Take us on board, we beseech you, and bear us away, and you shall hear our tale.”

Then the pilgrims consented to receive the strangers into the ship. And they sent clothes for the maidens, that they might be properly clad before they came on board.

VI.

The knights received the maidens graciously, although but a little before they supposed them to be wild mermaids. But at first they were ill, for they were not accustomed to the motion of the waves. When they

got well the Count of Carady commanded the best of food to be placed before them, and they ate and drank and were much refreshed.

They sat on deck beside the Count, and he said to them, "Make known to me, fair ladies, your tale. Tell me how you came to that desolate place on which I found you."

The eldest of the three maidens answered, "I come, my Lord, from a far land. I was born in India, where my father is a king. Alas! I shall never wear his crown."

The second answered the Count, saying, "I also come from a far land. A wild griffin bore me across the seas. Portugal is my home, where my father is King."

The youngest of the three, who sat next the Count, said to him, "I am the daughter of the King of the Iserland."

The noble Count then asked the maidens many other questions, and how it was they escaped death when the griffin seized them. And all on board marvelled at their tale, and the Count said—

"By the mercy of God you have been delivered from great dangers and troubles."

To Hagen he said, "The maidens have told me who they are, and whence they come, give you an account of yourself, brave young man. We should like to know something of you."

Hagen answered, "I was also brought to the desert

island by the claws of a griffin. The name of my father is Siegebund, and he reigns as King in Ireland."

"It causes me wonder," said the Count, "that the griffin did not slay you."

"God was my protector," said Hagen; "afterwards I slew the griffins, old and young."

When those around heard that Hagen had slain the griffins they marvelled the more, and said one to another—

"What strength dwells in the arm of this youth! A thousand men could not have slain the griffins, but he slew them alone."

The Count's brow grew stern when he heard Hagen's name, for Hagen's father was his enemy. And the Count's men feared Hagen when they saw his strength; and they wished to take away his weapons from him secretly, that they might afterwards bind him. But Hagen saw what they were attempting, and resisted them in anger.

The Count of Carady said to him, "Young hero, you have come into my power just at the right time. Your friends have done me much evil. Your father's men have slain mine, and have done much harm to my land. I shall keep you as a hostage."

Hagen replied, "I am blameless of the evil you have suffered at my father's hand. Bring me back to my father in safety, and I will assuredly make you and him friends, and there will be an end of strife between you."

Count Carady replied, "Nay, young man. You must

remain in my hands as a hostage for the good conduct of your friends."

Hagen heard these words, and he rose in wrath and shouted, "Ho, sailors, sail to the land of Ireland, and I will give you a rich reward. Change the sails, I say, quickly, or it will be worse for you."

Count Carady then gave commandment that Hagen should be taken and bound. His men rushed upon him; but they knew not that the strength of a giant lay in the youth's arm. He seized those that went near him by the hair, and he threw them overboard until there were thirty floating on the waves. Great fear fell upon the rest, and Hagen rushed to where the Count of Carady stood, and would have slain him had not the maidens interceded and saved the Count's life.

Quickly did the sailors now obey the command of wild Hagen, and the ship's head was turned towards Ireland. For seventeen days they sailed along, and all on board feared wild Hagen as he walked up and down the deck, and none dared to disobey his commands. As they drew near Ireland they saw a lofty castle on the hill, with three hundred towers. Hagen knew it was the castle of his father Siegebund. All on board the ship trembled for their lives when they saw it, but Hagen's wrath was past, and he told them not to fear anything for themselves. He said—

"I am not master in this land, but I will send messengers to my father, and beg him to lay aside his

ancient enmity against you. Who will be my messenger to King Siegeband? He shall win reward from me, and a rich reward from my father, and from my mother likewise."

Twelve of the pilgrims straightway offered to bear his message. He said to them—

"Go to the King, and ask him if he would like to see his son Hagen again, whom the griffin carried away. I know he will not believe you; so ask for my mother, and ask her if she will recognise me as her child if I show her the little golden cross on my breast that used to be upon it long ago."

VII.

The messengers went with speed to King Siegeband's castle. It was known to the King Siegeband that they came from the Count of Carady, and he looked upon them in anger, and said—

"How is it that you dare come into my presence?"

"We come," they answered, "as messengers from your son Hagen. If you wish to see him, you can easily, for he is now near at hand."

King Siegeband was much astonished when he heard the words of the messengers, and he said—

"You are deceiving me. My son is dead, and I have mourned him for long years."

The messengers said, "If you will not believe us we should like to see your Queen, and to ask her if the boy did not wear on his breast a golden cross. If you find this upon him, will you not acknowledge him?"

Then certain went and told Queen Ute the words of the messengers. When she heard them she rejoiced and said, "It is my child."

She went immediately to her husband and said, "Let us go and see Hagen."

Many horses were saddled, and the King and the Queen, and their attendants, rode to the shore, where they found the ship of the Count of Carady.

When King Siegeband saw Hagen he said, "Are you the knight who sent us the message? I shall be glad indeed if your tale is a true one."

Ute said to her husband privately, "Do not speak before all the people. I will soon tell you whether the young man is indeed the heir of your crown."

She asked to see the golden cross, and quickly she knew both it and her son, and she fell on his neck and kissed him, and wept for very joy.

"Long," said she, "have I been sick, but to-day I am well again. Welcome to your home, Hagen, my only child!"

The King also knew his son again, and rejoiced exceedingly. The old King also shed tears of joy over the son that had been lost and was found.

Hagen made friendship between his father and the

Count of Carady. They forgot their former enmity and strifes, and all rode back with rejoicing to Balian, where the strangers who had brought back his son were nobly entertained by King Siegebant. Afterwards they were sent back to their own country with rich gifts.

Many people flocked to Balian when they heard that the lost heir to the crown was found. All gazed with admiration upon Hagen, and wondered at his strength. He who had lived long in the lonely wilderness now learned to practise all the sports of noble knights. None could excel him. His youth had been spent among the wild beasts, and he ran so swiftly that no living creature could escape him if he wished to catch it.

After a time Hagen's friends counselled him to take a wife.

Hagen said, "I know whom I shall choose, and there is none better upon earth. She was my friend, and cared for me in days of evil and full of care. Hilda, the Princess from India, shall be my bride."

King Siegebant approved the choice of his son ; but he said that a year and three days must pass before the wedding, that there might be time to call all guests to the wedding. He sent messengers in all directions to invite princes from all lands as guests to his son's wedding. Those who were bidden caused to be made for them bright shields and saddles and bridles covered with bright gold, and fitting armour.

Many dwellings were erected around Balian to lodge

the guests; and when the wedding-day came round, guests assembled from all lands to take part in the festivities. Lord Hagen and Lady Hilda rode forth before all; and many brave knightly sports took place. The flowers and the grass were trampled by the horses' hoofs of the multitude of guests who were present.

At the end of the feasting King Siegeband arose and said, "I now give my land and all my castles to my son Hagen. Let all who have obeyed me now give obedience to him."

Hagen came forward, and he bestowed upon each hero the castle with its banner which he was to hold under him as lord. Many a hand was stretched to receive fiefs from King Hagen.

After this Hagen ruled over Ireland. There was none like him among the kings of the lands, for he ruled with a hand so strong that evil-doers trembled at the sound of his name. In a single year he beheaded more than eighty men for their misdoings. Men called him the Wayland of all kings. Whenever he heard of a proud neighbour he went forth against him, and broke his castle wall, and gave him deadly wounds. But when Hagen marched into the lands of his enemies, he commanded his soldiers, saying—

"Do not burn the houses, and do not lay waste the land, for I would not that you injure the poor."

Now to Hagen and to Hilda one child was born, and they named her Hilda. She grew up and became a

lovely maiden, and kings and princes from many lands sent messengers to Hagen to ask her in marriage. But Hagen was wroth when such messengers came to Balian, and he caused them all to be hanged upon the gallows.

BEOWULF

BEOWULF.

I.

THE land of the Danes was without a king. And there was confusion and disorder in all the land. Every one did what was right in his own eyes, for there was none to bear rule.

It happened at this time that there came a single ship to the land from across the waves. The people went on board the ship, and behold, there were no sailors, and no men in armour in the ship. No living thing was to be seen in it save one little boy lying beside the mast. Around him were laid many precious treasures, rich coats of mail, shields and swords, and gold and precious stones. The men wondered when they saw the child and all the rich treasures which lay around him. But one said—

“Surely the gods have sent this babe to our kingless land that he might become our King.”

The others hearkened to the voice of him who thus spake, and they made the child King of the Danes, and his name was called Scyld. He grew to man's estate,

and became a mighty king, and subdued the peoples under him. All the neighbouring peoples across the whale-roads obeyed Scyld, the King of the Danes, and paid him tribute. He gave many gifts to his own people, and he was loved by them; and when an heir was born in his hall, all were willing that he should sit upon his father's throne, and that the Scyldings should rule over them for ever.

Scyld himself became a very old man, and the time drew near for his departure into the peace of the Lord. Then said he to his comrades before he died—

“When I am dead place my body upon a ship, and send me forth on the sea even as I came.”

The comrades of Scyld hearkened to the words of their King, and when he died they bore his body to the shore where the ship was waiting. They laid the old King in the middle of the ship beside the mast, and upon his heart they placed a multitude of precious things. The ship itself they adorned with weapons of war, with coats of mail, and with all that became a warrior's bier. For they said—

“It is not fitting that he our King should now go forth laden with less wealth than when he came to us a solitary child.”

The winds wafted the ship out to sea. It vanished in the distance, and none ever knew whither it bore the body of the King.

After the death of Scyld his son reigned in his stead.

II.

Now Hrothgar was King of the Danes, and he was of the race of Scyld, the King who came alone in the ship to the land. Hrothgar was brave in battle, and he gained many victories over his enemies. His people loved him, for he often sat upon the gift-throne, and gave away rings and other presents to his people.

Now it came to pass when Hrothgar was an old man the thought entered into his heart to build a mighty house in which to sit and drink the mead with his thanes, and where he might set up his gift-throne.

When the work was finished all men admired it, and it was spoken of in many lands as the greatest palace in all the earth. The King gave to it the name of Heorot or the Stag, because its top was covered with pinnacles as the head of a stag with horns.

In Heorot sat the King upon his gift-throne, and from it he distributed to his heroes the wealth which God had given him. He was willing to give everything, this good King, except land and the lives of men; for these, he said, belonged to no one. Often did he feast with his heroes in Heorot, and in the evenings when it was dark outside, one could hear the noise of those feasting, the glad voice of singing, and the sound of the harp issuing forth from Heorot.

These sounds of mirth reached the ear of Grendel,

and he was envious and sore displeased. Now Grendel was a wicked creature who wandered about among the fens and moors, and dwelt in the dark waters. He was of the race of Cain, and was an enemy of God, and of all men that dwelt upon earth.

It came into the heart of Grendel to silence the voice of mirth and gladness in Heorot, and to turn it into mourning. He went to the hall under cover of the dark night. The heroes were lying in the hall fast asleep, for the feasting was at an end for the night. The fierce monster entered, and he seized thirty of the sleeping thanes and dragged them away with him. In vain did they struggle to escape his loathsome grip. He went away carrying with him the dead bodies of those whom he had slain. Then was there joy in his evil heart because of the ruin which he had wrought.

Great was the lamentation when morning came and it was known what Grendel had done in the night. The old King was sorely afflicted, and sat in sorrow. Next night Grendel returned to the hall, and again carried off thanes to his den; and this he continued to do night after night until the hall stood empty, for none feasted in it any longer. Yet Grendel never approached the gift-throne where Hrothgar sat; for this the Creator forbade, who wished not that evil should befall the King. But he wandered through the land under cover of the night, and wherever he found one in lone places on the misty moors, he seized him and dragged

him to his den. Many a tired warrior and brave young man disappeared, and no one ever saw them again.

For many years Grendel went through in the land destroying the great and the lowly, the old and the young, among the Danes. The King and his counsellors were filled with grief and perplexity. Often they took counsel together, but they knew not how to deliver the land from this destroyer who walked in the darkness. They went to the temples, and with many words besought the Destroying Spirit to save them. They prayed to the Destroying Spirit, for they were heathens, and they were ignorant of the Lord God their Creator. They knew not how to honour and serve Him.

III.

It came to the ears of Beowulf, in Gotland, what deeds Grendel had done in the land of the Danes, and how he had filled the land with lamentation and mourning. Now Beowulf was athane of Hygelac, the King of the Geatas. There was none like unto him for strength and for valour in all the land. And when Beowulf heard of the sorrow of Hrothgar, he said—

“Make ready for me a good sea-boat. I will go across the swan’s path to the help of the noble prince who is in need of me.”

The Geatas loved Beowulf, but they did not seek to

dissuade him. They knew that he was a strong hero who had done many mighty deeds, and they said—

“Of a surety Beowulf will deliver the King of the Danes.”

Beowulf then chose fourteen fighting men as his comrades in the adventure. Soon their ship floated on the waves, and the sailors climbed up its sides. The bright armour was taken on board, and the ship was shoved forth from the land.

Wafted by the wind, the ship passed over the waves like a swift bird. On the next morning the sailors looked forth, and behold, steep mountains and white cliffs glittering in the sunlight. They knew that they had reached the land of the Danes, and they guided the ship to the shore. They brought forth their coats of mail from the bottom of the ship, and they clad themselves in armour. They stepped forth upon the sands, and tied their ship to the land.

The Warder of the land, whose duty it was to watch the cliffs lest any enemy should approach, saw the mailed warriors come on shore. He tarried not, but rode to the shore to learn who they were. As soon as he met them he spake, saying—

“Make your names known to me quickly, bold men, who have come to this Danish land. I am here to see that none do mischief. Never saw I a form so mighty as that of the Earl who leads you. He is not one, I suppose, who stays at home, but one who loves to

travel in search of adventures. I must know who you all are, and whence you come, before you leave the shore."

Beowulf answered and said, "We are of the people of the Geatas, and subjects of King Hygelac, King of Gotland. My father's name was Ecgtheow, a prince who was well known in many lands. We have come from our own land to render help to the Lord of the Danes. For it has come to our ears what things the land is suffering through Grendel, and what he has done in the dark nights."

The Warder answered, "If you come as friends to the Lord of the Danes, I will be your guide to him. And I will command my comrades to guard your ship that no one injure it in your absence."

The Warder then led the Geatas towards the great hall in which King Hrothgar dwelt. When they saw it they wondered greatly, for never had their eyes seen a palace so splendid before. As soon as they were in sight of it the Warder turned his horse's head, and bade them farewell, saying—

"May God Almighty guard you. It is time for me to go. I must return to the shore to keep watch against the enemy."

The Geatas laid their shields against the wall of the palace, and they piled their ashen spears together in a sheaf. They entered the hall. Straightway one of King Hrothgar's warriors, named Wulfgar, came to them and said—

“Whence come you, men of war, clad in shirts of iron, and with weapons of war in your hands? You are no exiles, but men seeking for adventures.”

Beowulf answered, “We are comrades of Hygelac, King of Gotland. My name is Beowulf. I would speak with your King Hrothgar.”

Wulfgar went to seek King Hrothgar, and he found the old grey-headed man sitting among his earls. He addressed him, saying—

“There have come strangers to our land from a far country. They are called Geatas, and their leader is one named Beowulf. He desires to speak with thee. I counsel thee, O King, not to refuse his petition, for he and his followers look like earls in their splendid war-shirts.”

Then Hrothgar said, “Has Beowulf come hither? I knew him as a boy, and I have since heard of him oftentimes. Men say that there is the strength of thirty men in the grip of his fist. The holy God has surely sent him to help us against Grendel. Tell him to come quickly into our presence, and say to him that he is right welcome.”

Wulfgar reported the words of King Hrothgar to Beowulf and to his companions. He said to them—

“You may enter the presence of the King clad in your shirts of war, but leave behind here, I pray you, your shields and spears.”

The chieftain of the Geatas arose and followed

Wulfgar into the presence of the King of the Danes. His followers went along with him, save those he left behind to guard the shields and spears.

The heroes entered the hall of Heorot, where upon a lofty seat sat Hrothgar ready to receive them. Beowulf spake and said—

“Hail to thee, Hrothgar, King of the Danes! I am the kinsman and the thane of Hygelac, King of the Geatas. The deeds of Grendel became known to me when I was dwelling at home, and wise men counselled me to go to your help. I am strong, and have done many mighty deeds. It was I that destroyed the Jotuns, and who slew the Nicors by night. Alone will I meet this wretch Grendel. I ask this one favour of thee, O King, that thou wilt commit to me and to my companions the task of cleansing Heorot from the foul foe.”

Hrothgar answered and said, “Thou hast come as a defence to my land, Beowulf. I am filled with sorrow and shame. Grendel has robbed me of my warriors, and no one dare any more tarry in Heorot after the light of the sun departs. Thou art welcome, since thou hast come to meet the destroyer. Sit down on the benches of the hall, and join in our feasting before thou goest to encounter the enemy.”

A bench was cleared in the hall for Beowulf and for his companions, and they sat down and drank the bright ale which was poured out for them from the flagon.

A bard raised his voice and sang with a clear voice, and all the warriors rejoiced together, and there was great gladness throughout the hall.

But Hunferth, the son of Ecglaf, who sat at the feet of King Hrothgar, was displeased. He was grieved that any hero should come to the land boasting that he could do what no one among the Danes could do. He said scornfully to Beowulf—

“Tell me, art thou the Beowulf whom Breca overcame in a swimming match? I heard the tale. You both ventured out like foolish men among the waves in the days of winter. For seven nights you swam together, but Breca was the stronger. Thou wilt have a worse defeat shouldst thou venture to meet Grendel in the darkness of the night.”

Beowulf answered and said, “Hunferth, my friend, thou hast drunken too much beer. Breca never overcame me in swimming, nor did any one. But if thou wouldst hear the tale, thou shalt have it. Breca and I were boys at the time, and we swam out on the wintry sea with naked swords in our hands to defend ourselves against the sea monsters. For five nights we were together upon the waves, and he could not pass me. The cold north wind blew, and there came a great storm upon the sea, and we were parted. In the darkness there came up from the bottom of the sea one of the monsters that dwell there, and it seized me and dragged me down into the deep waters. The coat of

mail which I wore protected me, and I stabbed the wretch with my sword. But a great multitude of other sea monsters set upon me while I was at the bottom of the sea. I stabbed them all with my sword. When it became morning, and the sun rose, they were all washed ashore by the waves, and lay dead upon the sands. My sword had put them to sleep. Never afterwards did they hinder the sailors on their course. Afterwards I continued my journey although I was wearied, and at length the waves cast me upon the land of the Finns. I never heard that thou didst deeds such as these, Hunferth, nor Breca either. Thou didst slay thy own brothers, I know, for which thou shalt suffer the vengeance of Heaven. Hadst thou been such a hero as thou vauntest thyself, Grendel would not have laid waste the hall of thy Lord. But I, a Geat, will soon show what a brave man can do, and all men will sit down cheerfully to the mead-benches in this hall when they hear that Grendel is dead."

Hrothgar was well pleased when he heard the bold words of Beowulf, for the shepherd of the Danes put confidence in his promise.

Then entered the hall Waltheow, Hrothgar's Queen, and she took the beer-cup in her hand, and handed it first to the King, who drank of it joyfully, then she passed it round among the other heroes. She offered it also to Beowulf. He took it from her hand and drank, saying—

"I came to thy land to do a deed of might in thy hall. To-night I shall surely finish it or end my life."

Hrothgar now arose from his seat to go to rest for the night. All the other Danes rose to go with him. Before he left he addressed Beowulf, saying—

"Never did I before intrust this royal house to the keeping of a stranger. Guard it well. Be wakeful. Quit thee like a man. Farewell."

There were now none left in Heorot save Beowulf and his companions. Beowulf took off his coat of mail and gave it to his attendant. He gave to him also his sword and his shield, saying to him—

"I will not meet Grendel with weapons of war, for he knows not how you use them."

He then laid himself down upon a bench, and placed his head upon the bolster. The other Danes did the same.

IV.

Meanwhile Grendel was coming up from the misty moors to work ruin. When he reached Heorot he found the doors closed. They were fastened with bars of iron. He tore them open with his great strength, and entered the hall. He pressed forward quickly to the place where the heroes lay. From his eyes there issued forth in the darkness a light like unto fire. He saw the warriors lying asleep, and he laughed in his

wicked heart, for he promised himself a feast. He seized the nearest sleeping warrior and tore him to pieces. Bit by bit he devoured his flesh and drank his blood. He then advanced towards Beowulf. The hero was watching him. Raising himself up from his couch, and leaning upon his arm, he seized the hand of Grendel. Never before had Grendel felt a grip so terrible. Fear took hold of him, and he turned to flee. But Beowulf rose to his feet, and held him fast in his grasp of iron. Terrible was the struggle between Grendel and Beowulf. The hall shook with it, the ale was spilt, and all the benches fell. The Geatas awoke from their slumber; they drew their swords and hastened to the help of their Lord, but no steel, however sharp, could pierce the hide of Grendel. Presently there was heard a wild yell of pain throughout the hall, and Grendel fled away, having escaped the grasp of Beowulf; but when the heroes looked, behold, the arm and hand of Grendel were in Beowulf's hand. It was torn from his shoulder. Sore wounded and sick unto death, the evil monster hastened to the dark pool among the fens where he had his dwelling-place.

V.

In the morning the Danish warriors came in crowds to the gift-hall to Heorot to learn what had happened in the darkness. Right glad they were to hear the tale

of the Geatas. Some mounted their horses and followed the traces of Grendel. They rode to the dark pool where he dwelt. The dark waves were disturbed, and coloured with blood, and they said one to another—

“Grendel has breathed out his heathen soul.”

They rode back joyfully. Sometimes they ran races. They talked of the brave deed and of Beowulf; and one of the King's thanes, who had a store of such, told stories of great deeds that were wrought by other heroes in olden times.

It was told to Hrothgar what had taken place, and he went into the hall. He lifted up his eyes towards the high golden roof, and behold, as a trophy of the fight, there hung the arm of Grendel.

The King was glad, and he said to Beowulf, “Thou hast done a deed which all the might and wisdom of man was not able to accomplish. The mother who bore thee may well be proud of thee, Beowulf. Best of men, I love thee as my son. Ask what thou wilt of me, and I will give it. There is nothing I am not willing to give thee.”

Beowulf replied, “Willingly have I served thee in this matter, O King. Would that I had been able to hinder Grendel from going away! But the wretch will not live much longer. Pain will hold him in its deadly grasp until he dies in his den. It is the doom which the pure Creator has appointed for him on account of his crimes.”

All looked with wonder upon the hand of Grendel aloft upon the roof. The nails on the fingers were hard as steel. Hunferth, the son of Ecglaf, was silent as he gazed on that hand. By the commandment of the King, Heorot was made ready, for he desired to give a great feast because of the victory of Beowulf. The hall was much shaken and broken, and had it not been for the iron bolts by which it was fastened it would have fallen when Beowulf and Grendel strove together.

Now were the walls adorned with fair cloth of gold, and with many ornaments. The warriors entered in crowds to the feast, and sat down together on the benches. All gazed on Beowulf, and talked of his mighty deeds. The King brought forth his best gifts, and bestowed them upon the hero. The Queen, too, did not forget to reward him. She gave him precious raiment, and she hung around his neck a collar of gold, saying—

“Receive and wear, dear Beowulf, this collar of gold. Wear this raiment which I give to thee. May all young men follow thy example! Thou shalt be held in honour as long as thou livest for what thou hast done.”

The song was sung and the tale was often told within the hall that evening, and the heroes were joyful together.

At length the hall was cleared of the ale-benches, and beds and bolsters were spread upon the floor. The heroes desired to spend the night there. They feared Grendel no longer.

But Beowulf did not remain in the hall, because another lodging was made ready for him.

They sank to sleep weary with feasting, and no care or fear kept them awake. But one there paid dearly for his slumber. Grendel's avenger was near. His mother, a wretched woman of the race of Cain, came up from the cold streams in which she dwelt towards Heorot. She burst into the hall among the sleeping Danes. She was in haste, for her heart was less bold than Grendel's, and she wished to escape quickly. She seized that one of the heroes who lay nearest to her, and hastened away with him to the fens. He whom she seized was Æschere, the well-beloved counsellor of Hrothgar.

In the morning there was again loud lamentation in Heorot, and in all the dwellings of the Danes, when it was known that Æschere was dead. The old King was greatly troubled in mind, and he sent for Beowulf. And when Beowulf came the King said to him—

“Sorrow has again fallen upon the Danes. Æschere is dead—he who knew all the secrets of my heart, and who always stood beside me in the day of battle.”

Beowulf said, “By whom was the deed done, O King?”

Hrothgar answered, “I know who the fiend is, for I have heard men say that often when it was getting dark two forms were seen upon the misty moors. The one was like unto a man, only of larger form—that was Grendel; the other like unto a wretched woman. She

was his mother, and has done the deed. I know their home. It is not more than a mile distant. It is in a dark lake overshadowed by trees. Into that lake the stag will not plunge even although the hounds are close upon it, so fearful and unholy is the place. Thou art brave and strong, Beowulf, go to the place and seek the hateful being who has wrought the evil. If thou dost succeed, rich shall be thy reward."

Beowulf answered the King, and said, "Grieve not, O wise King. It is better to avenge a friend than to grieve for him. The end of life comes to us all. But while we live we must do brave deeds and execute justice. This is best for those who will come after. Arise quickly, O King, and let us go and search for Grendel's mother. 'I promise thee she shall not escape me, although she takes refuge in the dark wood or in the deep waters."

The old King arose from his seat when he heard the words of Beowulf, and gave thanks to God. He shouted to his attendants—

"Bring forth my horse quickly."

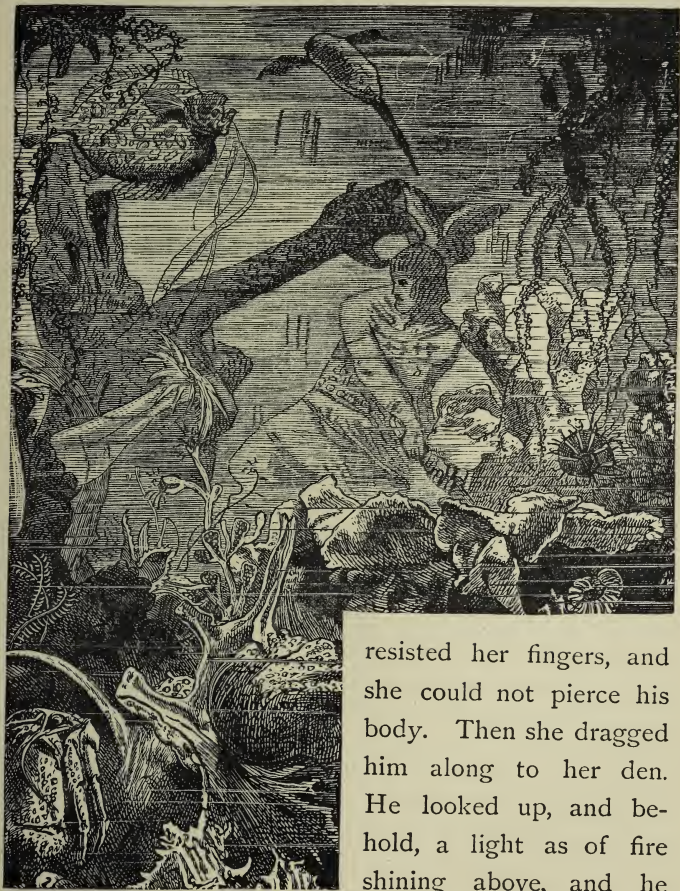
Hrothgar's horse was brought forth ready bridled. He mounted and set out along with Beowulf and a company of chosen men. They traced the footsteps of the evil being through the forest walks and across the dark moor. By a lonely path they found their way to the lake where the evil ones dwelt. Lying upon a rock they found the head of Æschere. They sat down and

watched the water. They could see that it was mingled with blood. And they saw swimming in the water many hideous snakes, and sea-dragons of hideous form. On the rock near were other monsters lying. When these heard the sound of the horns of Hrothgar's men they darted into the waters. But one of the Geatas took his bow and shot forth an arrow, which struck one of the creatures and wounded it. They dragged it out with a hook, and all looked with wonder on the hideous beast. Beowulf now prepared to explore the waters. He put on his shirt of mail. Upon his head he placed his helmet. In his hand he took the good sword Hrunting. Now Hrunting was the sword of Hunferth, the son of Ecglaf, the same who, drunken with beer, spake proud words to Beowulf. But Hunferth remembered not his former enmity, and lent his sword Hrunting to Beowulf as to a better warrior. When he was armed Beowulf spake to Hrothgar and said—

“Wise Prince, I am now ready for my journey. Thou didst promise to be a father unto me, and I beseech thee to protect my thanes should death snatch me away. Send to my Lord Hygelac all the gold and the rich gifts which thou gavest me, that he may know that I found in thee a generous giver.”

Having said these words Beowulf plunged into the water and disappeared among the dark waves. It was long till he found the bottom, so deep did it lie. Soon Grendel's mother discovered that a man had invaded

her dark abode. She rushed upon him to destroy him. She took him in her fierce grasp, but the mail-shirt



resisted her fingers, and she could not pierce his body. Then she dragged him along to her den. He looked up, and behold, a light as of fire shining above, and he

could see the roof and all that was within the den. He grasped his sword, and rushing at the she-wolf he

sought to run her through the body. But the good sword Hrunting could not pierce her skin. Beowulf then grasped her by the shoulder, and sought to overthrow her. And they struggled for life and death within the den. At length Beowulf threw her down, but soon she rose again, and seizing him with a terrible grip, she cast him upon the floor of the den. Then she placed her knee upon his breast, and taking a knife from her bosom she sought to stab him. But the mail-shirt of Beowulf stopped the knife. By the protection of God was he saved, and he threw the fierce woman off, and rose again to his feet.

Beowulf looked round the den, and behold, he saw hanging upon the wall an ancient sword. It was a sword that had belonged to the giants of old—a mighty blade, and strong to smite. He reached forth his hand and seized it, for he thought that he would once more strike for his life. He then smote the woman heavily upon the neck, and it spouted out blood, and she sank dead upon the floor. Beowulf looked at his bloody sword, and at the deed which he had done, and he rejoiced greatly.

After the fight was over Beowulf looked round the cave, and behold, lying in a corner he observed the dead body of Grendel. He went up to it, and with a blow he separated the head from the body, for he wished to bear it to Hrothgar that he might look upon the head of his enemy. But afterwards the blade of

the old sword with which he had conquered his enemy began to melt away. Like ice in heat the blade melted away, for the poisoned blood of Grendel destroyed it. Nothing but the hilt remained in Beowulf's hand.

Meanwhile Hrothgar and his men were gazing earnestly on the water where Beowulf had vanished. They saw blood mingling with the bubbling waters; and they feared, and said one to another—

“Alas! the water-wolf has destroyed the brave chief. We shall never look on him again.”

After long waiting, Hrothgar and his Danes left the place and turned their steps homeward. Hrothgar was sick at heart and very sorrowful. But the Geatas still waited on beside the water, for they were loath to give up hope. After long watching their eyes were gladdened by the sight of Beowulf swimming as a stout swimmer towards the land. He bore with him the mighty head of Grendel and the hilt of the old sword. His thanes gathered round him rejoicing, and they thanked God for his safety.

Four men took the head of Grendel, and placing it upon a stake, they bore the huge weight along. All went joyfully towards Heorot. And they bore Grendel's head into the hall, where the thanes were sitting drinking the ale. How greatly they all wondered when they saw the fearful sight!

Beowulf approached King Hrothgar and said, “I have brought to thee, O King, a trophy of the fight. It

almost cost me my life, but I escaped. God was my protector. It was not with Hrunting that I did the deed, but with this old sword whose hilt is in my hand."

Hrothgar took the hilt of the old sword from the hand of Beowulf to examine it. He saw that there were ancient letters inscribed upon it telling of old strifes. It had belonged to the giants whom God destroyed in the Flood.

Hrothgar then addressed Beowulf, saying, "Beowulf, God has given to thee high prosperity. Many winters have taught me wisdom. Refuse not, therefore, to listen to an old man's counsel. There was once a king in this land who was prosperous above all that went before him. But pride lifted him up, and he oppressed the Danes, the companions who sat with him at the board. He gave not rings according to justice, but with greedy soul kept all for himself. He brought disaster upon the land and upon himself. I have told this tale for thy learning. Be thou generous. Let not conscience, the soul's shepherd, sleep within thee, but watch against pride, and against the evil spirit. Now is the day of thy power, but forget not God the Ruler of glory, and the eternal counsel. For death will soon come to thee, as to all men."

The King then asked Beowulf to go to his seat and join in the feast. It continued until night came, when all retired to rest.

Next morning Beowulf said, "I must now return to

my own Lord, King Hygelac. Let our ship be made ready."

He restored to Hunferth the sword Hrunting, saying, "It is a right good blade, a friend in battle."

He said not to him that it had failed in the fight with Grendel's mother, for Beowulf was a high-souled chief.

To Hrothgar Beowulf said, "Well hast thou entertained us, O King, and we shall not forget thy goodness. Should it ever come to my ears that thou hast need of my help, I will come quickly, with a thousand thanes behind me."

Hrothgar replied, "Beowulf, thou art mighty in deed and in word. There is none like unto thee among the heroes. None can discourse so wisely, and do such deeds as thou canst. Should sword or poison take away the life of thy Lord Hygelac, the youthful shepherd of the Geatas, they will not easily find a better king than thee."

Hrothgar gave to Beowulf many costly gifts as a reward for the services which he had done to the Danes. He then embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they both wept, the old white-haired King and the young hero.

Beowulf then went to his ship, and his men with him. They took on board all the costly gifts of Hrothgar. They spread the sail from the mast, and the ship bounded through the waves until it reached again the land of the Geatas.

Hygelac was glad to see his kinsman Beowulf return. He and his men were soon sitting at Hygelac's table, for so the King willed it. And the King said—

“What adventures didst thou meet with, dear Beowulf, in the land of the Danes? It was against my will that thou wentest thither, for I thought it right that the Danes should fight their own battle with Grendel. But I give thanks to God that thou art returned safe and sound.”

Beowulf told the King how he slew first Grendel and afterwards Grendel's mother. And all wondered; and there was a great feast, and much rejoicing and singing of songs among the guests. Hygelac's young Queen Hygd entered the hall, and with her own hand bestowed gifts upon the heroes, and handed to them cups of ale. And Beowulf gave to his King Hygelac of the treasures which Hrothgar had given him. And on Hygd he also bestowed a gift which he had brought from the land of the Danes—a rich ornament of gold wrought by a very cunning workman.

It came to pass that after this Beowulf remained at home by the side of his King and kinsman Hygelac. But it entered into the mind of Hygelac to invade the land of the Frisians. He was wroth with them, and he desired to carry away much booty from their land. He went thither in many ships, but the people of the land and other peoples went up against him, and there was a great battle. And the Geatas were vanquished, and

their King Hygelac was slain. And the enemy stripped him of his armour. But Beowulf they were not able to slay, for he fought his way through their ranks until he reached the water, and he swam back to his own land.

There was weeping and wailing in the land when it was known that King Hygelac was defeated and slain.

When Hygd, the Queen of Hygelac, heard that her husband was dead, she said to Beowulf—

“Be thou King in this land; for my son Heardred is but a child, and cannot rule over this great people.”

But Beowulf said, “Not so. It shall never be said that I robbed my Lord’s son of his crown and his inheritance. But I will stand by him, and guard him, and counsel him until he grows to man’s estate.”

This Beowulf did.

After the young King was grown to be a man, and was ruling over the Geatas, he was slain at a banquet by the stroke of a sword by one who bore him hatred.

On the death of King Heardred, Beowulf was chosen King of the Geatas, and for many winters he ruled in the land. Although he fought many battles, and made many wars, yet was his life preserved until he was an aged man.

In the old age of Beowulf there came a great terror in the land. There was an ancient hoard of precious things laid up in a cave near the sea. It had been gathered by those who lived in olden times. Into the cave fled a certain slave who was fleeing from the hand

of a cruel master, and he saw the hoard, and knew that the things were precious. He took a cup of gold, curiously carved, in his hand, and he said, "If I return to my master with this in my hand, surely he will be gracious unto me." And he went to his master and gave him the ancient cup, and found grace in his sight.

But there lay beside the ancient hoard a dragon fierce and terrible, and it was the guardian of the hoard. When the dragon knew that the hand of man had been in the ancient hoard which it had so long guarded, it was wroth exceedingly. It issued forth from the cave, and went through the land in the night season. From its mouth there issued streams of fire, and no man could stand before it. Even the houses and cities of men were burned and blasted by its breath.

The old King Beowulf heard what the dragon was doing to his land and his people. He said—

"In my youth I fought many fights, and I will go and seek out this monster, and fight with him for my people's sake."

He bade farewell to his men, and went with a few attendants to the cave where he heard dwelt the dragon. He was clad in a coat of mail, and held his sword in his hand. He bore also a shield of iron, that he might withstand the fiery breath of the dragon. But he said to his men—

"I would not bear sword and shield against this

monster if it were possible. Rather would I meet him as I did Grendel of old, with the grip of my hand."

When they drew near the place where the dragon lay Beowulf said to his followers—

"Tarry ye here in the wood by the hillside, I will go alone and seek the dragon. I mean to gain the treasure in yonder cave for my people or to die in the attempt."

The old King then went towards the cave beside the sea with his shield on his arm, and in his hand the old sword with which he had fought many battles. He saw before him an ancient arch of stone, and issuing from it a stream of water, and the water was hot exceedingly, so that he could not dip his hand in it. He then knew that the dragon was near, and he shouted with a loud voice. The dragon heard his shout, and its rage awoke at the voice of man. It rushed forth from the den to destroy the bold fighter who had come to disturb it. As soon as it saw Beowulf it vomited forth a stream of burning flame. But he sheltered himself behind his shield, and struck hard blows with his sword. Although he struck often and strongly, he was not able to pierce the thick scales of the monster. And the edge of his sword soon grew blunt with much striking.

Beowulf's men watched the fight from afar. They were hiding in the wood. Fear filled their hearts as they looked upon the fiery monster. One of them,

Wiglaf by name, grieved when he saw his master fighting alone against the serpent. He said to the others—

“When we received many gifts from our lord in the beer-hall, we promised to follow him, and to stand by him in the fight. The time is come when our lord hath need of us. Let us go to his help against the fiery dragon that seems ready to devour him.”

Having spoken these words, Wiglaf ran down the hill to the aid of his lord. He shouted to him—

“Dear Beowulf, strike hard as in the days of thy youth. I will help thee.”

But the serpent again came upon them vomiting forth fire, and the shield of Wiglaf was quickly burned up. It was but a wooden shield that the hero bore. Then was he fain to take refuge behind the shield of his lord. The serpent pressed hard upon the two warriors, but Beowulf, mindful of his old deeds, fought mightily with his sword, and kept it off. But at length Naegling, Beowulf's sword, broke in his hand, and he could not longer keep the serpent at a distance. The foul beast drew near to him and clasped him in its horrid coils, so that the blood spouted from the body of the old King. And the fiery breath of the creature burned his hand. But Beowulf yielded not his life. He bethought him of the knife which he bore by his side, and drawing it he plunged its sharp edge into the serpent's belly. It fell dead, and the King was released

from its embrace. But Beowulf was sore wounded, and sick unto death. He lay beside the dragon which he had slain, and the wounds which he had received burned as with fire; and he knew that the time had come for him to leave this world.

Wiglaf the thane went to the side of his beloved lord, and he gently bathed him with water, for he was covered with blood. Beowulf looked towards the mouth of the cave from which the dragon came forth, and behold, he saw stone arches strong and mighty, and he knew that they were the work of the giants of old.

Beowulf spake to Wiglaf, and said, "Death is coming near to me, Wiglaf, and had I a son I would now give my armour to him, but no son lives of mine. For fifty winters have I ruled over the Geatas. I have fought the battles of my people, and I have never sworn falsely, nor have I stained my hands in the blood of my kindred. Now I am sorely wounded, and sick unto death. But fain would I look upon the treasure for which I have given my life. Pray, Wiglaf, go quickly into the cave and fetch out some of the precious things, that my eyes may behold them before I die."

Wiglaf obeyed the command of the King, and fetched from the cave bright gold, and precious gems, and ancient cups made in the olden times. On his return he found his lord fainting, and at the point of death. He sprinkled him again with water, and again

Beowulf opened his eyes, and he gazed on the beautiful things before him. He said—

“I give thanks, O Lord of all, King of glory, for



this treasure which I have gained for my people in the day of my death. I sorrow not that I have spent my life in the winning of it. Bid my warriors raise a lofty

mound on Hrones Ness. Sailors at sea will behold it from afar, and they will call it Beowulf's Mound."

Beowulf then unclasped from his neck a collar of gold and gave it to Wiglaf. He gave to him also his coat of mail and his helmet, and bade him wear them.

"Thou art the last of my race," he said, "for fate has carried away the rest of my kindred, and I go to join them."

These were the last words of Beowulf, King of the Geatas. His spirit left his body and went forth to seek the dwelling-place of the true.

Wiglaf sat beside his lord, and he sought to revive him by sprinkling water upon his face, for he knew not that he was dead.

Then came forth from the wood where they had been hiding the unfaithful followers of Beowulf, who did not fight for their lord through fear of the dragon. They came as men ashamed. And Wiglaf reproached them with fierce words. He said to them—

"The armour which you wear was the gift of the King. He gave it to you when you sat on the ale-bench that you might stand by his side in the day of battle. But he threw it away, for you came not to his help when the mighty beast assailed him. It is better for an earl to die than live the shameful life of a coward."

When it was known among the Geatas that Beowulf their King was dead, there was great sorrow and

lamentation throughout the land. And men said one to another—

“Now cometh a time of trouble and strife, for the King is dead, and there is no one to rule among us. Alas! the Franks and Frisians will speedily hear the tidings, and will greatly rejoice.”

Many went out to see the dragon which Beowulf had slain. It was fifty feet in length, and looked so fearful that none would have approached it had it been still living. Beside it lay cups of gold, ancient and precious swords, and other precious things of ancient times. Wiglaf spake to those who came, and said to them—

“These precious things have been won with a great price, the life of our dear Prince, the shepherd of the people. He, before he died, said many things to me; and he asked me to say to his warriors to erect a lofty mound at the place where his body was burned to keep alive his name. This he asked as a return for all the kind deeds which he had done for his people during his lifetime. Let us make ready to obey his commands.”

Wiglaf asked seven thanes of the King to enter again with him into the cave. One went before them with a lighted torch. And they carried out what yet remained of the hoard within the cave.

They pushed the body of the dragon over the cliffs into the sea. In a waggon they bore away the treasure of the cave, and the body of the dead King Beowulf was borne to Hrones Ness.

A mighty funeral pile was there erected, for wood



was brought from many places to build it up. It was hung round with helmets, with shields, and with coats

of mail. The warriors placed the body of Beowulf in the midst of it, and they kindled the pile with a blazing torch. Then there rose black smoke and bright flame, and the fire roared fiercely. The heavens seemed covered with darkness, and everywhere you might have heard the voice of wailing. At length all was consumed, the fire burned out.

Afterwards a mighty mound was erected on the hill beside the sea. The Geatas buried in it rings of gold and precious things which they had brought forth from the cave.

Often in after days did the Geatas speak of their King Beowulf, and said—

“Among the kings of the earth Beowulf was the greatest lover of glory. He was mild and gentle too, and loved his people.”

THE DEATH OF ROLAND

THE DEATH OF ROLAND

I.



CHARLES the great Emperor has warred in Spain for seven years. He has thrown down the walls of every city and castle within the land save Saragossa, which lies upon a hill. To Saragossa Marsile, the King of Spain, has fled. He and his army have taken refuge behind its walls.

Marsile was not a worshipper of the true God, but a servant of Mahomet and of Apollo. Marsile sat under the shadow of a tree on steps of blue marble in an orchard at Saragossa. There were twenty thousand men around him, and beside him lay his dukes and counts, and the leaders of the heathen host. Marsile spake to them, saying—

“Listen, noble lords. What a wretched fate is ours! Charles, the Emperor of sweet France, has come into our land to make us his slaves. I have no longer an

army large enough to give him battle. Give me counsel, I beseech you, my sage counsellors, and tell me how I may be saved from death and from dishonour."

There was silence among the counsellors of Marsile at the King's words. At length one lifted up his voice and spake. It was Blancandrin, who was the sagest among the dukes of Marsile. He said—

"Be not affrighted, my lord, but give heed to my words and thou shalt find safety. My counsel is to send messengers to the proud King, and to beg for peace. Promise to yield to him faithful service, and to be his friend for ever. Send also precious gifts to the King of France—bears, lions, and dogs, seven hundred camels, and a thousand falcons. Let four hundred mules also be sent to him, loaded with enough gold to fill fifty waggons. Then will the King of France be able to pay his soldiers. Let the messengers say to him that if he will return home to Aix, before many weeks have gone thou wilt follow him thither, and that at the great feast of St. Michael thou wilt present thyself in his chapel and receive his Christian faith. If King Charles asks for hostages let him have them, ten or twenty as he will. My son shall be one of them. It is better that a few young men and young women should lose their heads than that we all come to beggary together. If thou followest my counsel, I swear by the beard upon my breast that thou wilt see the Franks leave their camp forthwith, and they will return each

man to his loved home. And the day will come round when the Emperor will go up to his chapel in Aix on the festival of St. Michael. He will look for thy coming on that day, O King, but he will look in vain. The Emperor is terrible in his wrath, and his heart is fierce, and when he finds out that he has been deceived, he will cause the hostages to be slain, my son among the others. But it is surely better that they lose their lives than that we lose our beautiful and famous Spain, and have to beg our bread."

When Blancandrin had done speaking the heathen knights shouted with one accord—

"He hath spoken well. Let it be done even as he has said."

Marsile then chose ten knights; he chose the most crafty and treacherous in the whole army, and he said to them—

"Go quickly to Cordova, where you will find the great King Charles laying siege to the city. Mount yourselves upon white mules, as those who are messengers of peace. When you have found him, beg him for the sake of his God Jesus to have mercy upon me. Say also to him that I am willing to receive his Christian law."

II.

The heathen lords did as their King commanded,

and rode on white mules to the city of Cordova. Charles had already taken the city. He had battered down its walls with his great machines, and all the people who would not receive baptism he had slain with the sword.

He was reposing in a great orchard. Around him, seated upon white carpets, were his knights Oliver and Roland, Samson and Anseis, Gottfried of Anjou, the bearer of the great standard, and many others. The King himself sat under the shadow of a pine-tree, and his seat was a throne of gold. There was no need for the lords of Marsile to ask, "Who is the King?"

They knew him at once by his noble form and kingly countenance. He seemed a very old man, and his hair and his beard were as white as snow.

After the lords of Marsile had done obeisance to King Charles, Blancandrin gave to him his master's message.

"I greet thee," he said, "in the name of God, the glorious One whom we ought to adore. I bring to thee the message of King Marsile. He is willing to share his treasures with thee. Thou shalt have lions, bears, and greyhounds, seven hundred camels, a thousand falcons, four hundred mules laden with gold and silver, fifty chariots in which to carry your riches. These are among the gifts my master will send. A store of coins of the finest gold with which to pay your soldiers shall also be thine."

Charles listened to the words of Blancandrin, and when he had done speaking, Charles lifted up his hands to God, he bowed his head, and became lost in thought.

After a time he looked up, and fixing a stern gaze upon the messengers of Marsile, he said—

“You speak fair words, but your King is my enemy. How can I put trust in him?”

Blancandrin answered, “Thou shalt have hostages—ten, fifteen, twenty, as thou wilt. My own son shall be one of them. My master will not fail to perform his promise. It will certainly come to pass that when thou art returned to thy royal palace to celebrate the day of St. Michael, he will appear even at those miraculous baths which God created for thee. It is indeed his purpose to become a Christian.”

When Charles heard the words of Blancandrin he exclaimed—

“Then may he indeed be saved.”

It was now evening, and King Charles commanded the mules of the Saracens to be sent to the stables. A tent was erected in the great garden to lodge the messengers. There they rested for the night.

III.

In the morning Charles arose, heard mass and matins, and went and sat down under the pine-tree, and called

to him his barons. He always loved to have his Franks with him in all that he did.

His barons came. There came the Duke Ogier, the Archbishop Turpin, Richard the Elder, and his nephew Henry. Acelin from Gascogny, Theobald of Reims, and his cousin Milun, Gerer, and Gerin. With them came also Count Roland and Oliver. There came Ganelon the traitor, and a thousand others besides.

King Charles declared to them the message which King Marsile had sent. He asked them to speak their mind, and to give him their counsel. When Charles had done speaking they all exclaimed—

“Let us be on our guard.”

And Roland started on his feet and said, “Place no faith on the promises of Marsile. He has always been false. Did not he once before send messengers who bore olive branches in their hands, and they said the same words as these have said? You took counsel with your Franks, and by their advice you sent two of your counts to the heathen King, whom the false traitor beheaded. If you follow my counsel you will not listen to the words of Marsile, but you will lead your hosts to Saragossa, and take vengeance for your slaughtered knights.”

While Roland was speaking those words, Charles sat with his head bowed. Not a word did he speak, but he pulled his beard and his moustache. The Frankish knights also remained silent. Ganelon alone spake.

“Sire,” he said, “when King Marsile offers to become your vassal, to hold Spain under you, and to receive your Christian faith, it seems foolishness to reject his offer. He who advises you to do so is not wise, but is filled with foolish pride. Turn away from the counsel of fools, O King, and listen to the words of the wise.”

Then Duke Naimes, a most faithful servant of Charles, spake and said—

“In the words of Ganelon there is wisdom. King Marsile is vanquished. You have taken his castles and his strong places, you have burned his cities, and you have slain of his people a very great multitude. And now that he begs for mercy, and offers hostages, it would be a sin to exact more from him.”

He exclaimed, “The Duke Naimes speaketh wisely.”

Charles said, “My lords and barons, tell me whom I shall send to Saragossa as bearers of our message to this King Marsile.”

Duke Naimes shouted, “Send me, O King.”

Charles said, “No, I will not send you.”

Then Roland exclaimed, “I go to Saragossa.”

But Oliver, when he heard that Roland wished to go on the King’s errand, said to him—

“No, Roland; it is not fitting that you should go to King Marsile. Your spirit is too proud and fiery. I fear you would make a quarrel. But if the King will, I will bear his message to the heathen.”

He answered, "Be silent both. Neither of you shall stir a foot from this place. By my white beard I swear not one of my twelve peers shall leave my side."

Archbishop Turpin of Reims then spake, saying, "Give me, King Charles, the baton and the glove. I will go to the Spanish pagan."

Charles answered, "Sit down, Turpin, on the white carpet, and do not speak until I command you."

King Charles spake again and said, "Knights of France, choose you one from among the French barons whom I may send with my message to Marsile."

Roland said, "There is Ganelon, my stepfather, send him."

When the Franks heard Roland name the name of Ganelon they shouted approval, saying—

"You will find none wiser than Ganelon. Send him."

But Ganelon was sore displeased. Rising to his feet, he threw from his shoulders his cloak of furs, and stood before the barons in his silken tunic. He was a noble, stately knight; and all the barons gazed upon him with admiration.

"Why," he said, "all this hatred to me, most mad Roland? All know that I am your stepfather. You have given the counsel to send me to Marsile. If it be God's will that I ever return from his camp, I will take care to cause you sorrow."

Roland answered scornfully, "I am not frightened by

threats, Ganelon. We required a wise man, and I named you; but if the King permits me, I will gladly go in your stead."

"In my stead you shall not go," said Ganelon in wrath. "King Charles has commanded me to go to Saragossa to find King Marsile, and I obey."

Approaching the Emperor, Ganelon said, "Most just Emperor, I stand before you ready to fulfil your commands."

The Emperor held out his right hand with the glove in it, and Ganelon drew near to take it, but, lo! before he could grasp it, it fell on the ground.

The Franks exclaimed, "An evil omen!"

Ganelon said, "Give me my dismissal. You shall hear of me again. If it is my fate to go, let me go at once."

Charles raised his right hand, gave to Ganelon his absolution and his blessing, saying—

"Go in the name of Jesus, and in my name."

The King also gave to Ganelon the baton, and letters to deliver to King Marsile.

Next morning Ganelon clad himself in a bright coat of mail, and put on spurs of gold. On his thigh he bound his sword Murgleis, and he mounted his steed Tachebrun. His knights, when they saw him preparing to go, gathered around him weeping, for they feared that evil would overtake him on his errand. Some wished to accompany him, but Ganelon said—

“No, I go to death alone. You, my friends, may live to return to sweet France. Bear my greeting to my fair wife, to Pinabel my friend and peer, and to my little son Baldwin. Do not forget to serve him truly as your lord.”

Having spoken these words he rode forth on his errand to King Marsile. After he had ridden a little way he overtook Blancandrin and the other messengers of Marsile. They were waiting for him under the shade of an olive-tree.

Ganelon entered into conversation with Blancandrin, who said to him—

“Your King Charles is a marvellous hero. What deeds he has done! He has taken Calabria and Apuleia. He has gone over the seas to England, and compelled even the English to pay their pence to the Holy Father. But tell, why comes he into Spain? What does he seek in our land?”

“It is his humour,” answered Ganelon, “and there lives no man on earth who can oppose him.”

Blancandrin spake again and said, “The Franks are a noble people. But those dukes and counts do wrong who counsel their master to so many wars. They will ruin Charles as well as themselves.”

Ganelon said, “Do you wish to know the name of the counsellor? It is Roland. I will tell you what I saw one day. Charles was sitting under the shade of trees, before Carcassone. His nephew Roland, dressed

in full armour, approached. He bore in his hand a red apple, and this he gave to Charles, saying—

“‘Take this, dear lord. The crowns of all the Kings of the earth do I offer to you.’

“Such a pride as Roland’s deserves punishment. The knight courts death. The man who slays Roland will do a good deed. For were he dead, there would be peace in the world. But, alas! he is much beloved among the Franks, for he has an open hand, and gives freely. The Emperor does according to his will. Roland will not rest until he has conquered the world, even to the far East.”

Thus did Ganelon and Blancandrin talk together by the way as they rode along. Blancandrin was glad exceedingly when he found what hatred to Roland dwelt in the heart of Ganelon. And it came to pass that the false traitor knight pledged his word to Blancandrin to help him to compass the death of Roland.

IV.

At length Ganelon and his companions reached Saragossa, where Marsile awaited their coming. They found the pagan King under the shade of pine-trees, and sitting on a royal seat which was covered with the silks of Egypt. Around him was gathered a great host of his Saracens.

Blancandrin stepped before the seat of the King, and taking Ganelon by the hand, he addressed King Marsile, saying—

“Hail to thee, King Marsile, from Mahomet, and hail from Apollo, whose holy laws we observe. We bring to thee a message from King Charles. He whose hand I hold, Ganelon, is a man wise and mighty among the Franks, and he will deliver the message of his King.”

Ganelon had well considered beforehand in his mind the words to use to King Marsile. He wished to stir up his mind against Roland. He said to him—

“Hail, King Marsile. I greet thee in the name of the glorious God whom we ought to adore. Charles sends to thee this message. If thou wilt consent to adopt the Christian law, thou shalt receive from him half of Spain to hold as vassal under him. If thou wilt not consent, thou shalt be led away a captive to Aix, and there thou shalt die the death of a felon.”

King Marsile trembled when Ganelon spoke these words. There was in his hand an arrow tipped with gold. This he aimed at Ganelon, and would have thrown it, but those around hindered him.

Ganelon drew his sword half away from the sheath, and said—

“If I am to die, the rest of you shall die with me.”

Those around King Marsile said, “Let us put an end to this strife. It is not fitting that the messenger of King Charles should be slain.”

They besought Marsile to put away his anger, and to listen patiently to Ganelon.

Marsile hearkened to the voice of his counsellors, and resumed his seat. The Caliph said—

“I pray thee, O King, let Ganelon deliver the message of his King.”

Marsile consented, and Ganelon spake, saying, “I am willing, King Marsile, to forget thy threats, and the acts which thou hast done towards me, but neither gold nor treasure will seal my lips and prevent my giving to you the message which my almighty King, thy mortal enemy, committed to me.”

Ganelon then threw off his mantle of fur, but with his sword he would not part. When the heathens looked on him standing before their King, they exclaimed—

“Behold how noble a baron!”

Ganelon opened his mouth and spake again, saying, “Thou art angry without a cause, King Marsile. My master promises to give to thee half of Spain if thou wilt receive the Christian law. The other half is to go to his nephew Roland. Thou shalt have a proud partner in thy kingdom. But if thou consentest not, thou shalt certainly be led captive to Aix, and there thou shalt lose thy head. Here is the Emperor’s letter, and in it thou shalt find written the words which I have spoken.”

Marsile, pale with rage, snatched the letter from Ganelon’s hand. He broke the seal quickly, and cast

the wax upon the ground. He read the letter, and said to his knights—

“Listen to what is here written. He bids me remember that he is wroth with me because of the death of Basan and his brother Basill, whom I beheaded in the mountains of Haltile. If I would save my life I must send to him my uncle the Caliph, or he will have nothing to say to me.”

The son of Marsile said, “Father, the insolent Ganelon has spoken folly. He must live no longer. Give him up to me, that he may receive the due reward of his words.”

Ganelon, when he heard the words of the son of Marsile, drew his sword, and placed his back against the pine-tree. But Marsile turned away from him and went into the garden. Blancandrin followed the King, as did also his son Jurfalet, and the chosen counsellors of the King. Blancandrin then told them what Ganelon had said to them on the way, and how he had promised to betray King Charles, and to compass the death of Roland.

When Marsile understood the words of Blancandrin, he sent for Ganelon, and said to him—

“Pardon my sudden passion. I would hear more of this matter. Tell me about your Emperor Charles. I know he is an old man. He has lived for two hundred years to my knowledge. He has gone through many lands, and has brought many princes to beggary. When will he rest from his wars?”

Ganelon answered, "Charles will not rest from his wars as long as his nephew Roland lives, and there lives no mightier knight under heaven than Roland. And his companion Oliver is not less valiant. The twelve peers whom Charles so much loves are ever around him with twenty thousand other knights. Guarded by them Charles knows no fear."

Marsile answered, "My dear Ganelon, there is no nobler people than thine upon earth. But I have a host of four hundred thousand horsemen, and with these I shall defeat Charles and his Franks."

Ganelon said, "Be counselled by me. Thou canst not defeat King Charles. Make use of guile. Send rich gifts to the Emperor, gifts such as shall cause the Franks to marvel greatly. Send also twenty hostages. Give him promises that thou wilt receive his faith and become his vassal. Charles will then leave Spain and return to sweet France. He will go away through the Pass of Cizre, but he will leave behind him his rear-guard, and with it his nephew Roland, and Oliver, Roland's friend. Twenty thousand Franks will be with them. Send a hundred thousand of your heathen warriors against them, and in the first battle, although many a Frank will fall, you may be defeated. Afterwards send a second army, and you will get the victory, and Roland will fall. And Roland once dead, the Emperor will desire war no more, and there will be peace in all our homes."

Marsile fell on the neck of Ganelon and kissed him. He said—

“Swear to me, Ganelon, to betray Count Roland.”

Ganelon swore on the holy relics within the hilt of his sword Murgleis. Marsile caused a chair of ivory to be brought, on which was borne the book of the laws of Tervagant and of Mahomet. On these did the Saracen King swear that he would slay Roland and his army.

Ganelon said, “God bless your enterprise, O King!”

The followers of King Marsile were well pleased with Ganelon when they heard what he had promised. There came up to him Vadabrun, and with a smiling face he said—

“Take this sword, there is no better on earth. From friendship I give it to thee. In its hilt are more than a thousand gems. Aid us against Roland.”

“It shall be done,” said Ganelon. Then did they kiss on the cheek and chin.

Then came the heathen Climorin, and said with smiles to Ganelon—

“Take my helm as a gift, for thou art to help us to bring dishonour upon Count Roland.”

“That I will,” said Ganelon; and the two chiefs kissed one another on the cheek and lip.

And behold, there came the Queen Bramimonde, and said to Ganelon—

“Dear Count, my husband’s friend, accept these two golden bracelets for your wife. The jacinths and

amethysts of these bracelets are worth more than the treasures of Rome. Your Emperor never had the like of them."

Ganelon accepted the bracelets, and put them into his boot.

King Marsile called for his treasurer Manduit, and commanded him to make ready rich gifts to send to Charles, and to find twenty hostages of the highest rank. Marsile then took Ganelon by the shoulder and spake in his ear, saying—

"Hero and wise man, by that faith which you hold holy let nothing change your mind and separate you from us. Rich shall your reward be. Ten mules loaded with the fine gold of Arabia I shall send you, and every year a like gift shall go to your castle. Take with you the keys of my town, and offer its treasures to the Emperor; but make sure that Roland is left in the rear-guard when the Emperor marches out of Spain. Deadly will the battle be when I find him in the passes."

V.

Ganelon mounted his war-horse and rode back to King Charles. He found him standing on the green grass before his tent. Roland and Oliver were beside him, and many another knight of fame. The traitor Ganelon approached him and said—

“God’s blessing upon you. I bring to you the keys of Saragossa, rich gifts from King Marsile, and twenty hostages. He asks your pardon for not sending the Caliph ; but he fled from King Marsile that he might not be obliged to receive the Christian faith. Three hundred knights followed him, but they were all drowned in the sea. King Marsile promises to follow you to sweet France before a month is over, and to receive the Christian faith, and swear fealty as your vassal.”

King Charles said, “God be praised. You have done well, and shall be rewarded richly.”

He then gave commandment to sound a thousand bugles, that all might make ready for returning to sweet France on the following morning.

When night came Charles fell asleep in his tent, and behold, he dreamed a dream ; and he thought that he was in the Pass of Cizre, and in his hand he held an ashen spear. Ganelon came to him, and taking it from him, broke it in pieces. Again he dreamed yet another dream ; and he thought he was in his chapel in Aix, and there came a bear and seized his right arm, and bit him. Then also came a leopard from the Ardennes, which sprang upon him in great fury. Then a greyhound came, and it sprang towards him with many gambols. This greyhound seized the bear and bit off its ear. Afterwards it attacked the leopard with great fury. And the Franks looked on and exclaimed, “What a great fight !” but it was not known to which victory

was to be given ; and the King did not awake, but slept on until morning.

When morning arrived the King arose and rode to his army, which was now prepared to march. He said—

“ Lord barons, we are about to march through narrow passes. Counsel me to whom I should intrust the rear-guard.”

Ganelon said, “ To my stepson Roland, for you have no knight like him.”

The King turned and looked sternly at Ganelon, and said, “ An evil spirit art thou, Ganelon. The wish for murder is in thy heart. To whom shall I intrust the vanguard ? ”

Then said Ganelon, “ To Ogier of Denmark, for there is none more worthy of the trust than he.”

Count Roland said, “ Grateful am I, my lord stepfather, that you have given me the rear-guard. Be sure the King shall lose neither horse nor mule, nor anything of his baggage, for my sword will guard all.”

Ganelon answered, “ I doubt you not.”

Going to King Charles, Roland said, “ Just Emperor, give me the bow which you hold in your hand. I shall not allow it to fall to the ground as did Ganelon with the baton.”

The great Emperor bent his head ; he pulled his beard and his moustache. Tears fell from his eyes, but presently he gave the bow to his nephew. Then he said—

“Dear nephew, with you I shall leave the half of my host, so as to make you safe.”

But Count Roland said, “Never shall I thus bring dishonour upon my house. Give me twenty thousand Franks, and enter the passes without fear. None shall harm you while I live.”

Roland sprang upon his war-horse, and his comrade Oliver joined him. There came also to him Gerin and Gerer, Othon and Berenger, also Samson and old Anseis. Gerard of Roussillon, the proud, and with him the rich Duke Engelier.

The Archbishop Turpin exclaimed, “I go too with him.”

And so exclaimed Count Walter, saying, “I am Roland’s man, and without me he shall not go.”

Count Roland called Walter of Leon, and said, “Take one thousand men, and occupy the hills above the passes, and see that the army of the Emperor goes through them in safety.”

VI.

Charles and his army now passed through the defiles which lead from Spain into France. They passed under the shadow of great mountains, and through dark and desolate valleys, and it was a long and toilsome way ; but at length they drew near the land of their home.

And having caught a glimpse of Gascogny, they wept tears of joy as they thought of the fair maidens and loving wives who were watching for their coming. But the heart of King Charles was heavy, for he was thinking of his nephew who was left behind in Spain, and the King shed tears as he thought of him.

Then said Duke Naimés to the Emperor, "What thought troubles thee, O King?"

King Charles replied, "Why ask me that question? My heart is grieved because of Ganelon. He seeks to destroy France. An angel appeared to me in my dream, and Ganelon broke the spear in my hand. Ganelon sent my nephew to the rear-guard. If Roland falls, I shall not find his like again."

THE FIGHT AT RONCESVALLES.

I.

When King Marsile heard the Emperor Charles was gone, he summoned around him his lords and barons, and in the course of three days four hundred thousand men, were assembled at Saragossa. The image of Mahomet was carried to the highest tower of the city, and from it did the heathen with many tears and prayers beseech aid. This done, they marched away through the valleys, and over the mountains, until they

came in sight of the banners of the rear-guard of the army of King Charles.

Then did his nephew ride up to King Marsile, and said to him—

“My gentle lord, I have served you long and faithfully. Grant to me as my reward that I may strike the first blow at Roland. By the help of Mahomet I will send my sharp spear through him.”

King Marsile gave his glove to his nephew. The nephew received it, and said proudly—

“A great gift, O King, is this which thou hast given to me. Choose me eleven barons, and with them I will combat the twelve peers of France.”

Then exclaimed Falseron, the King’s brother, “I will accompany you, nephew.”

“And I will be a third,” said King Corsablis of Barbary, who was a knight of evil soul.

Malprimi of Brigal, whose foot was fleetier than the fleetest horse, then cried aloud—

“To Ronceval I also go, and wherever I find Roland, there shall I slay him.”

There also offered to go the Emir of Balaquer, the Almacor of Mauriane, Turgis of Tortosa, Escremis of Valtierra, and the heathen Estorgant, and with him his brother-in-arms Estramaris, than whom lived no greater villains. Margaris, of the kingdom of Seville, a noble knight whom women loved to behold, promised to accompany him. Lastly came Chernuble of Montenegro,

a horrid wretch. His hair was trailing on the ground. Men said that in the land where he was born no man saw the sun, there were no herbs, no rain fell, nor dew.

It is a land where there is no stone that is not black in colour ; and men say it is inhabited by evil spirits.

Chernuble said, "I will go and try my sword against Durendal."

Then did the twelve pagan peers set out from Saragossa at the head of a hundred thousand men. They waved their banners in the air, blue and white and red. And when they drew near to the place where the peers of France were keeping watch, the sound of their thousand trumpets fell on the ear of Oliver. Oliver said—

"Companion, I think we shall have a great battle with the heathen."

"God grant that it may be so ! our duty is to fight for our King," replied Roland.

Then Oliver climbed a hill, and he saw passing through a green valley the innumerable heathen host. He called to Roland, saying—

"I see coming from Spain white banners and flashing helmets. Roland, we are betrayed by the villain Ganelon, who counselled the Emperor to place us here."

"Silence, Oliver !" said Roland ; "he is my stepfather. Speak no more of him."

Oliver called again to Roland, and said, "Roland, I see a multitude of heathen more than I can number.

Our few Franks cannot meet them. Blow on your horn so that the Emperor may hear, and turn back to our aid."

"So please God," said Roland, "I never shall allow my name be mentioned with dishonour in sweet France. I will not blow my horn, but I will draw Durendal and strike those heathen hounds. I tell you they shall die."

When sage Oliver saw that Roland would not take his counsel, he came down from the hill and took his place beside his comrade. Presently the heathen host approached with a mighty tumult. And when Roland saw that the foe was approaching he became fierce as a tiger or a lion.

Before the fight began the Archbishop Turpin rode up to a small hill, and preached a sermon to the Franks.

"Lord barons," he said, "our Emperor has left us here, and it well becomes brave men to die for their King and country. Our Christian faith is in danger. Maintain it. Beseech the aid of Almighty God, and confess your sins. I grant you absolution, that your souls may be saved. In your death shall you be holy martyrs, and you shall have a seat among the blessed in Paradise."

The Franks then dismounted from their horses, and the Archbishop blessed them in God's name. The penance he imposed upon them was to fight the heathen. They mounted again; and Roland was to be seen

riding along on his swift horse Vaillantif. Never in your life saw you a nobler knight. In his hands he holds a spear with a white banner, the golden fringes of which reach to his hands. Fierce was his aspect when he looked upon the Saracens, but gentle and friendly was the look he gave to his Franks. He said to the Franks—

“Lord barons, the heathen are coming fast upon us; but they come to death. When the fight is over, we shall have such a pile of booty as never Frankish king had before.”

Oliver said to the barons, “Forget not the battle-cry of Charles.”

The Franks heard his words, and with one voice they shouted, “Montjoie!”

And now the heathen host approached, and Aelthoth, the nephew of Marsile, spurred his horse and rode forth, shouting contemptuously—

“Frankish knaves, your King is a fool to have left you here. To-day shall sweet France lose its honour, and great Charles his right arm.”

Then was Roland filled with rage when he heard these words, and spurring his horse, he rode furiously against the insulting heathen. When they met, the spear of Roland dashed in pieces the shield, and pierced the coat of mail and heart of Aelthoth. The heathen fell a dead man from his horse.

Falseron, the brother of King Marsile, saw his nephew

slain, and he grieved bitterly. Shouting the battle-cry of the heathen, he rode towards the Frankish host, crying—

“To-day, to-day shall sweet France lose its honour.”

But no sooner had he uttered these words than Oliver rode against him, struck him a mighty blow with a spear, and Falseron lay dead beside his nephew. Then came forth Corsablis, and defied the armies of France.

But when the Archbishop Turpin saw him, he spurred his horse with his spurs of gold, and ran him through the body with his lance. He fell dead upon the ground.

The Archbishop looked upon the dead body and said, “Thou didst lie, thou heathen hound! the Franks lose not their honour. A like bloody bed awaits your friends.”

In like manner Malprimi of Brigal fell before the spear of Gerin; and Gerer pierced the Emir to the heart.

Oliver cried, “This is a fair battle.”

After this Samson slew Almacor, Anseis slew Turgis of Tortosa, Engelier of Bordeaux slew Escremis of Valtierra, and Othon slew Estorgant. The spear of Berenger pierced the body of Estramaris. Thus fell ten of the heathen peers slain by the peers of France. Two only remained, these were Chernuble and Margaris.

A brave and active knight was the Count Margaris, and he spurred his horse and rode against Oliver. His spear broke the spear of Oliver at the golden shield, and it passed close by the hero's side; but it did not

wound him, for God was his protector. Margaris rode onwards, and sounded his horn to gather his followers. Terrible was the fight that followed. All shared in it. In the thickest of it fought Roland. With his spear he struck so long as the shaft lasted; but when it broke in his hand he drew from his side the good sword Durendal, and spurring his horse, he made for Chernuble. Lifting the sword, with one blow he smote the helmet of Chernuble, and it cleft the heathen's head, and passed down through his body till it sank in the horse on which he rode, and horse and rider fell dead together on the grass. Then rode he through the battle-field, dealing blows on the right hand and on the left, until horse and rider were covered with Saracen blood.

Nor was Oliver much behind his friend Roland. And all the peers of France struck many a deadly blow on that day. The Franks fought so that many Saracens fell before their blows; but their own ranks also were thinner, and many a brave Frankish youth fell on the soil of Spain, never again to look on mother or wife.

II.

Meanwhile King Almaris with a chosen band went through the narrow defiles, and made a sudden attack upon Count Walter, who was guarding the heights above

the gates of Spain. And when Count Walter saw the heathen King with a mighty host furiously attacking his men, he said—

“Alas, we are betrayed by Ganelon!” but he drew his sword and gave them battle. Count Walter fought bravely as became a knight; but he was attacked by the heathen on every side. His strong shield was forced from his hand, and heathen lances pierced his side. He looked around for his men, and they were all slain. Seeing it vain to contend further with such a host, he went down the mountain-side to ask Roland for aid.

III.

While Roland and the peers were fighting the heathen in Spain, there passed a great storm over France. Loud thunder was heard in the air, and men saw flashes of bright lightning in the clouds, and there came a great darkness over the land although it was noonday. There was also a great earthquake which went from Besançon to Wissant Bay, and from St. Michael's Mount to Cologne. It shook the houses all over the land. Men were sore afraid, and exclaimed—

“Surely the last day is at hand.”

They knew not that it was the mourning for the death of Roland.

IV.

Meanwhile the battle raged in Spain, the Franks fought like lions, and the green grass was covered with Saracen dead. At last not one Saracen remained except Count Margaris, who, when he saw all his comrades slain, rode off with a broken spear in his hand and a pierced shield. He rode until he came to the place where King Marsile was waiting for tidings of the fight. For until now Marsile had remained far off with a second and mightier army. Kneeling before him, Margaris said—

“Sire, go quickly against the Franks. More than half are lying dead on the field, and the rest are wounded and weary. Go and strike now, and you will surely gain a victory.”

The heart of Marsile beat high when he heard the words of Count Margaris, and with a mighty host he marched with haste against the Franks.

The sound of the trumpets of the heathen reached the ears of Roland and Oliver as they stood together. When the Franks saw this second host coming up against them, they cried in dismay to Roland and Oliver, and to the other captains. The Archbishop took up the word, and said—

“For the sake of God let no thought of flight or of dishonour enter your hearts! Death is near to us, I

know well ; but let us die on the field like men, and we shall all meet again in Paradise, and take our seats beside the Holy Innocents."

The Franks were encouraged when they heard the words of the Archbishop, and the cry "Montjoie!" again filled the air.

King Marsile looked down from the hill-top on the little army of the Franks, and he gave the word of command to advance against them. The blast of a thousand clarions then burst upon the ears of the Franks. When they heard, they exclaimed—

"O God our Father, what a host cometh up against us! We are betrayed by the treason of Ganelon."

Again the Archbishop cried, "Soldiers of God are you all. And in Paradise this reward will be yours, to rest your weary limbs upon the holy flowers. But no coward shall enter there."

Thereupon the Franks shouted, "We shall all win Paradise."

Mounting again on their horses, they rode to meet the heathen host. The battle began, and the first knight that fell was Gascon of Bordeaux ; him did Climorin slay, Climorin of Saragossa, who gave the amethyst to Ganelon. But Oliver soon avenged the death of Gascon. Grasping Hauteclere in his hand, he rode furiously against Climorin, and smote him dead. The demons carried away the soul of Climorin.

Vadabrun, King Marsile's foster-son—he who had

taken Jerusalem, profaned the temple of Solomon, and who slew the Patriarch—mounted on his steed Gramimon, next attacked Duke Samson, and the heathen sent his spear through the knight's body, who fell dead on the ground.

A cry of mourning rose from the ranks of the knights when they saw their cavalier fall. But when Roland saw Duke Samson lying dead, he swung aloft his sword Durendal, and he drove it through head and cuirass and body of Vadabrun.

Malcuidant, son of King Malcus, who wore a vest of beaten gold, and rode on the fleet steed Saut-perdu, next smote Anseis on his shield, and the Christian knight fell dead upon the plain. But the Archbishop Turpin avenged his death.

For long did they fight, and there fell on the plain many a Christian knight and many a Saracen.

When Marsile saw that multitudes of his knights lay dead, and that the rest were fleeing, he gave command to others who were waiting to advance. Abîme had command of the army that now advanced against the Christians. He was black in colour, and hideous to behold; a heathen and a foul felon, whose hands were stained with blood and treachery. He bore the dragon flag of his race before his men.

When the Archbishop saw him, he said to himself, "That Saracen seems to me to be a great heretic. I will go to slay him, or to die by his hand."

And saying so he bestrode his good horse, which he had taken from King Grossaille, whom he slew in Denmark. It was a beautiful steed, with so swift a foot that you never saw its match. The steed he spurred towards the enemy, and no sooner did he get near enough to Abîme than his sword came down upon the heathen's shield, on which glittered many a precious stone. The sword of the Archbishop cleft it, and Abîme fell dead.

When the Franks saw the deed they exclaimed, "Would to God that the Emperor had more bishops such as this one!"

Roland shouted to Oliver, "The Archbishop is a worthy knight. There is none better under heaven. Let us go to his aid."

The fight was renewed with great fury. But it went ill with the wearied Christian knights, who were now attacked by great multitudes of the heathen. The ground was covered with the dead bodies of Franks, and at length only sixty were left alive.

Roland still continued to fight, and all who approached him met their death speedily. But when he looked around and saw so many of his knights cold in death, he sighed deeply. He thought of France and his uncle, King Charles, whom he would never see again. Then he noticed Oliver with his sword Hauteclere smiting the Saracens.

Roland lifted up his voice and called to his friend,

saying, "Come near me, my gentle friend. Let us die together, and when the Emperor comes he will find us not divided. This is a sad day for France."

Again Roland said to Oliver, "Look, but sixty men remain. I must now sound my horn and let Charles know."

But Oliver said, "No, that would be a shame."

But Roland said, "The battle goes against us, and Charles should know it."

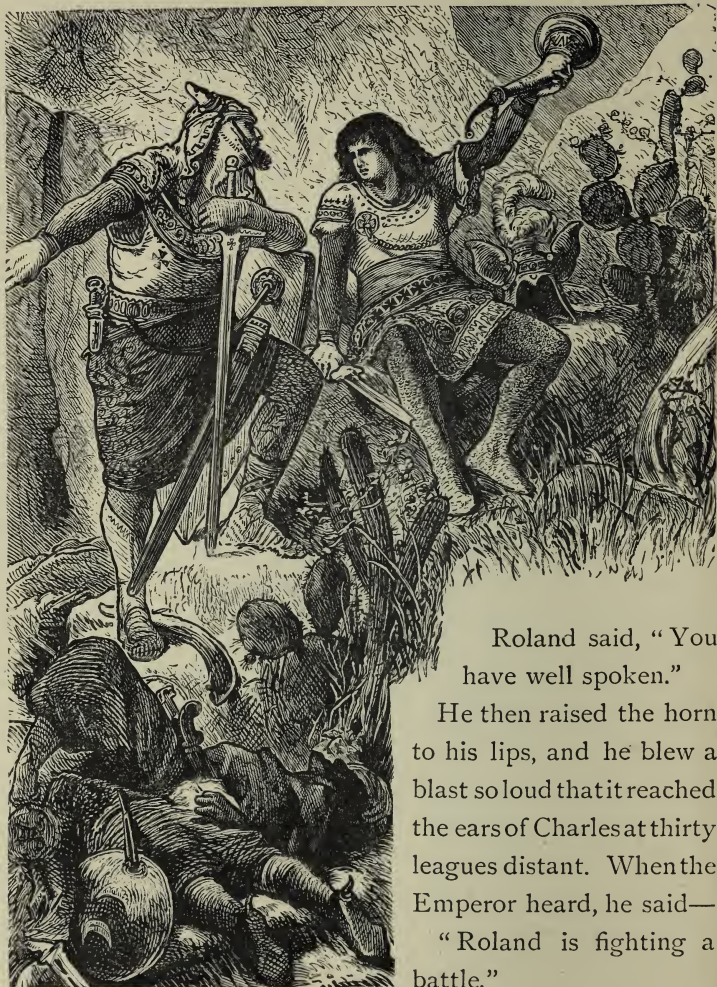
"Nay," said Oliver in wrath, "you shall not do it. I asked you to sound your horn when you might have saved all, but now you must not. If you do a deed so unknighly, should we return to France, never shall you clasp my gentle sister Alda in your arms."

Roland said, "Why, Oliver, are you angry with me?"

"Because, Roland, you have wrought all this ruin. Had you taken my counsel and blown the horn, then had King Charles come, and the field would have been won, and Marsile would be a captive or a dead man now."

When Archbishop Turpin saw that the two heroes were in anger, and were quarrelling, he rode up to them and said—

"Sir Roland and Sir Oliver, I beseech you in God's name contend not! Blow the horn, Sir Roland. It is too late now to bring Charles to save us, but he will come as our avenger. The Franks will lay our bodies in God's earth, and the boar, the dog, and the wolf shall not feed on our limbs.



Roland said, "You have well spoken."

He then raised the horn to his lips, and he blew a blast so loud that it reached the ears of Charles at thirty leagues distant. When the Emperor heard, he said—
"Roland is fighting a battle."

But Ganelon said, "Sire, did another say the word, I should say nay."

Again Roland blew with his horn a mighty blast, so that the bright blood came from his mouth, and again the sound of the horn reached King Charles. He said—

“Of a certainty that is Roland’s horn; and he had not blown it unless he had been in battle.”

But Ganelon said in scorn, “I wonder to hear an old man speak the words of a child. Have you forgotten Roland’s pride, or do you think he would stoop to ask for help against any enemy? Let us press on, for we have yet many a weary mile before us.”

A third time the horn sounded, for Roland blew again; and King Charles and his men heard it. And the King said—

“That is a long blast.”

Duke Naimés answered, “Sire, it is Roland, and he has blown his horn because the battle is sore against him. He who betrayed him now wishes us not to guess the truth. I counsel you to hasten to the aid of our noble hero.”

The Emperor gave command to sound the trumpets throughout the host, to summon the Franks to make ready to go to the help of Roland. Right willing they were, although they had to turn their back upon sweet France once more. They made great haste to buckle on their armour. Their banners floated in the air; and the Franks again marched through the dark valleys and under the shadow of the hills which they had so lately passed.

Their hearts were sad with care, for sorely did they fear that they should not reach in time to save Roland. As they rode along the King said—

“Call me Besqun, the chief of the cooks.”

Then he said to Besqun, “Besqun, make Ganelon a prisoner. And watch well that he does not escape you. The villain has betrayed my knights.”

Then went Besqun with his kitchen knaves and made Ganelon their prisoner. The traitor had an evil time of it among them. For one tore the hair from his beard, and another from his moustache, and some struck him with their fists, and others with staves. Then they put a halter round his neck, and led him along as a man leads a bear.

Meanwhile Roland stood wellnigh alone, looking on the battle-field where he and his comrades had fought that day. And when he saw the long rows of gallant knights lying dead on the plain, with tears streaming from his eyes, he exclaimed—

“Barons of France, God be merciful to your souls! May you rest sweetly among the flowers of Paradise! Never were there braver knights on earth than you. For many a year have you served me, and for Charles have you gained many a kingdom. You have died to-day for my sake, and I was powerless to save you. May God the Lord help you, who is never faithless!”

Turning to Oliver, Roland said, “Brother Oliver, I

shall die of grief, if the sword of the enemy does not slay me. Let us charge the heathen once more."

This they did, and many a good blow did Roland deal with Durendal. On the other side fought Marsile stoutly. He rode on his horse named Gaignon. Marsile met Sir Beuvon, the Lord of Beaune and of Dijon, and with one blow struck him through shield and cuirass. He also struck down Ivon and Ivor, and Gerald of Roussillon.

When Roland saw from afar the exploits of Marsile, he spurred his horse and rode towards him, and he said—

"King Marsile, you have slain my friends before my eyes. But before we part to-day you shall know the name of my sword."

Saying these words he lifted up his sword, and brought it down with such force that it cut the right hand of Marsile from his body. With another stroke he cut off the head of Marsile's son, the fair Jurfalet.

When the heathen warriors saw their King wounded, and his son slain, they were filled with great fear, and they exclaimed—

"Mahomet help us! Who can fight those whom Charles has sent against us? Let us flee."

And although they were a hundred thousand men, the Saracens, with their wounded King, then fled before the Franks, and left Roland and his little company of Christian knights the victors of the field.

Alas! the victory was vain. For presently another

heathen host appeared. It was the host of Algalif, the Lord of Ethiopia. The host he led was more than fifty thousand men. Warriors black as ink followed him. Not a white spot was to be seen in one of them except the teeth. On they rushed in wild wrath, shouting aloud the battle-cry of the heathen. When they saw how few the Franks were they were glad.

Marganice, Lord of Carthage and Ethiopia, a cursed land inhabited by black people, spurred his steed with his golden spurs, and rode against Oliver. Oliver did not see him, for Marganice came behind, and he ran his spear through Oliver's armour till it came out at the breast.

Oliver knew that he had received his death-wound; but he grasped Hauteclere, and struck a blow on Marganice's gold-crowned helmet. And the blow was well struck, for it clave the caitiff to the belt.

"Evil caitiff! never shalt thou boast in thy land to wife or dame of the evil thou hast done to the servants of King Charles."

Although wounded to death, Oliver fought on, and the heathen fell before him; but when Roland came near him, he said—

"Roland, to-day we part."

Roland rode close up to his friend and looked into his face, and he saw that it was ghastly pale, and that the red blood was flowing from his wound.

Roland, when he saw the plight in which his friend was, exclaimed in bitter grief—

"Alas, Oliver! I shall never find on earth so worthy a knight as thou art. How desolate will our sweet France be when robbed of its knights! What a sore loss will it be to our Emperor!"

But Oliver's eyes were dim with the darkness of death, and he knew not what he was doing; and seeing a knight pressing close on him, he lifted Hauteclere and struck him, and the blow from his dying hand smote the crest of Roland and broke his helmet, but it pierced no farther, nor did it injure his head.

And Roland saw how it was, and he said in a soft voice—

"I am Roland thy friend, Oliver; no foe is near thee."

Oliver answered, "I hear thee speak, brother, but I cannot see thy form. Forgive me if I struck thee."

"Thou hast not hurt me, Oliver," said Roland.

Oliver felt that his last hour had come, and he dismounted from his horse, and lay down on the green sward. He folded his hands, lifted them up to heaven, and confessing his sins to God, he begged for Paradise. He then blessed the Emperor Charles, sweet France, and his loving friend Roland above all. And so he died.

V.

Roland stood beside his dead body weeping; but presently he heard a voice calling him, and he looked to

see how the fight went. Only two cavaliers remained, Walter of Hum and the Archbishop Turpin.



When Roland saw Walter, he said, "Where, Walter, are the thousand men I gave to you?"

Walter answered, "Alas, thou shalt see them no

more! they all lie dead upon the mountain; and I am pierced with many a lance-wound, and will soon die also."

Sore was the wrath and sorrow of Roland when he heard these words. He rode to the place where Walter and the Archbishop were fighting the foe. Many a blow did those three knights deal in their anger, and many a Saracen fell from his saddle; but what availed three men against the forty thousand who now pressed upon them, and flung showers of javelins and darts? First fell Walter, and yielded up his spirit to God. The Archbishop also fell beside him in a swoon, his shield pierced with the darts of the heathen.

Roland stood alone, and he was sorely wounded, and there was great pain in his brow since he sounded the horn. But he desired to know if Charles was coming, so he blew the horn once more. It was but a feeble blast, for he was weary and wounded. The Emperor heard it, and stood still. And he said—

"My lord barons, this is an evil day. My nephew Roland dies. Let him who would look on his face ride forward with speed."

Then the Franks blew their trumpets, and the sound fell upon the ears of the heathen. They said one to another—

"Charles is nigh. Good God, Spain is lost!"

And they made another charge at Roland, but the Archbishop, although wounded and on foot, stood up and fought beside Roland; and so terrible were the

blows which the two knights dealt that the heathen feared to come nigh unto them.

Then they said to one another, "The Franks are nigh; we hear their trumpets, and the cry "Montjoie!" Let us now stand at a distance from Roland, for mortal man cannot conquer him; but let all throw their javelins at him and at his companion. They did so, and soon was Roland's shield pierced, and his armour also. His good steed Vaillantif fell dead under him.

The heathen turned and fled, for they knew that Charles drew near to avenge; but they left Roland and Turpin wounded to death.

The Archbishop was most sorely wounded, and Roland knelt beside him and strove to stanch his wounds. Then he went round the field to seek for the bodies of the other peers of France. And he bore them one by one and laid them around the Archbishop. The Archbishop absolved and blessed them. He lifted up his eyes to heaven, and repeated *Meâ Culpâ*, and prayed for Paradise. Thus died Turpin, the good warrior of Charles. All his life had he fought well against the heathen in battles and in his sermons.

VI.

When Roland saw the Archbishop was dead, he took the fair white hands and crossed them upon his breast. He said, lamenting him—

“Ah, noble knight, and loving comrade, I commend you to heaven’s high Lord! Never did one serve his God better than thou. A prophet wert thou such as we have not seen since the days of the apostles. Pain and torment are not for thee any more; the gates of Paradise will open to receive thee.”

Roland felt that his own end was drawing near, and he went to a spot where he saw some marble steps under the shade of a pine-tree. There he sat down, but soon he fainted from loss of blood. A Saracen passed him as he lay unconscious. And the heathen saw Roland lying, as he thought, dead. He said—

“There lies the nephew of Charles. I will have his sword, and take it back with me to Arabia.”

And he stooped and took the sword from the hand of Roland. But Roland awoke out of the swoon, and when he saw a stranger warrior with his good sword Durendal in his hand, he was filled with anger, and grasping his horn, he struck the heathen such a blow that he fell dead at his feet. Roland arose and took the sword, for he willed not that it should fall into heathen hands, and he struck it violently against a great rock which was nigh at hand; but although he struck it many times, it would not break, nor was there one dint upon its sharp edge. When he saw that it would not break it, he sat down again upon the marble stair, and he said—

“Alas! my fair bright sword, the gift of King Charles,

thou hast been my companion many a year. With thee I conquered in Poitou and in Maine, in Normandy and in Brittany, in Constantinople and in Italy, and in many another land. Fair and holy sword, may God save thee from falling into heathen hands! Within thy hilt are sacred relics stored—a tooth of St. Peter, St. Basil's blood, and the hair of St. Denis."

VII.

Roland, feeling that death was upon him, laid himself down upon the green sward, and he placed beside him his horn and his sword. His face he turned to the heathen host, that Charles might know when he came that he had died as a victor. He then thought of France and of his kindred there, of Charles his King, and the tears fell from his eyes. And striking his breast with his hands, he looked to heaven and said his *Meâ Culpâ*. He exclaimed—

"True Father, who deceivest never, who didst raise Lazarus from the grave, and didst save Daniel in the den of lions, deliver my soul from the perils which my sins have brought upon it. I repent of all the sins which I have done."

Then he lifted up his right hand to heaven, and offered to God the glove which he held in it. The angel Gabriel came and received it. Then Roland died.

God sent one of His angel Cherubim from heaven, and he and Gabriel bore away the spirit of the hero to Paradise.

THE VENGEANCE OF KING CHARLES.

I.

The Emperor rode into the plain of Roncesvalles at the head of his men. But woe, woe, what a sight met his gaze! The ground was everywhere covered with dead men.

"Where art thou, Roland? Archbishop Turpin, Otho, Ivon, and Ivor, where are ye all?" Thus the old King cried in his pain. "Of my twelve peers is there not one left to meet their master?"

The Emperor tore his beard and wept, and his men wept around him when they saw what misfortune had befallen France.

The first that spoke was the Duke Naimes, and he said to the Emperor—

"Sire, I see clouds of dust yonder; there ride the heathen who have wrought us this ill. Let us ride after them and take vengeance."

Charles looked to the quarter where Duke Naimes pointed, and he said—

"They are far off; but we shall try and overtake them, for they have done France much evil to-day."

He called Tybalt of Reims and Count Milo, and said to them—

“Guard the battle-field while we go yonder. Let no lion nor wild beast touch the dead, nor the hand of man.”

They promised to obey his charge, and he gave them a thousand warriors to keep the field.

Charles and the rest of his army pursued in haste the flying heathen. But the day was far spent, and Charles looked towards the sun, and he saw that the daylight would not last long enough to enable him to reach the heathen host. He then dismounted from his horse, and knelt down on the green grass and prayed God to make the sun stand still in the heaven until he accomplished his work of vengeance upon the heathen.

God sent to Charles His own angel, and the angel whispered in his ear—

“Ride on, and the light shall not fail thee, for God has seen what the heathen have done to France.”

God then worked for Charles the miracle which he had asked for. The sun stood still in the heavens, and shone upon the land while the Franks pursued their enemies. And in the Val Tenebres they overtook them, and they chased them while they fled all the way to Saragossa, slaying a great multitude. And when the waters of the Ebro were reached, the heathen prayed to Tervagant, and plunged into the stream; but not many came out at the other side, for most were drowned in

the river. And the Franks shouted, when they saw them perishing—

“Roland has slain you. You die for him.”

The Emperor and his men slept that night upon the field under the sky, and their horses grazed beside them. Next day they returned to Roncesvalles to bury the dead heroes. When King Charles came to the place where Roland's body lay upon the green grass, he dismounted from his horse, and taking him in his arms, he lamented him, saying—

“Dear Roland, may thy spirit rest in Paradise! but it was an evil hour for me when thou wentest into Spain. When I go back to Leon men will ask of me, Where is thy nephew? where is Roland? And, alas! I must answer, He lies cold in Spanish soil. Woe for France, for the mighty captain is fallen! Now will the Bulgar and the Hun, and my other enemies, rejoice, for there is none to check their wickedness.”

Geoffrey of Anjou then begged the Emperor not to let himself be led astray by sorrow, but to bury his dead. The Emperor arose, and gave commandment that it should be done. The Franks collected all the bodies of their companions and laid them gently in graves. The priests offered prayers to God for the souls of the dead.

II.

It came to pass that after he was wounded, King Marsile fled to Saragossa, and entering his palace gate, laid himself down under the shade of an olive-tree. And his Queen Bramimonde came to him; and when she saw that the King's hand was cut off, she wept and wailed bitterly. And all throughout the palace there was lamentation, and they cursed Charles and all his men. Some went to the Grotto of Apollo, and they said to him—

“Ah, evil god! what dishonour hast thou done us! Thou art not worthy of service, for most evilly dost thou reward thy faithful servants.”

Then they wrenched from him his crown and his sceptre, and throwing him on the ground, they beat him with sticks. And Mahomet fared no better, for they cast him into a trench to be torn by dogs and swine.

After this it came to pass that the Emir of Babylon, when he heard of what had happened, marched with a great host to the aid of King Marsile; but Charles marched against him, and defeated him near Saragossa in a great battle. The Queen of Marsile watched the fight from the towers of Saragossa, around her the clerks of the unholy law of Mahomet. She looked down on the battle below, and behold, when it went against her

friends, she went and told the King, and said, weeping—

“My lord, we are defeated. The Emir is slain, and his army is fleeing.”

The King turned his face to the wall and died. The demons bore away his wretched soul, for he died in his sin.

Then King Charles came up against Saragossa, and took the city. The lofty walls he laid low; and a thousand Franks were sent by King Charles throughout the city, bearing axes and hammers in their hands, and they found out every mosque and every synagogue. They broke them down, and destroyed all the pictures and images of the false gods.

The bishops blessed the baptismal waters, and the heathen were brought to the font and were baptized. And if any one refused baptism, he was burned or slain by the King's command. In this way were a hundred thousand baptized; but Queen Bramimonde Charles did not cause to be baptized in Saragossa. He purposed to lead her away a captive to France, and he wished to convert her to his faith, not by force, but by love.

After leaving a host in Saragossa, Charles marched with his army towards France. Queen Bramimonde was led away a captive in his train. Charles and his men marched until they came to Bordeaux, and there on the high altar of Saint Severin Charles laid the horn

of Roland. From Bordeaux he and his men went onwards to the Garonne, which they crossed in ships. They reached the city of Blaise, and there they laid the bodies of Roland and of his comrade Oliver, and of the Archbishop Turpin, in fair white marble tombs within the shrine of Ronan.

Onwards to Aix they went, and there Charles seated himself in his great seat in his palace hall. Then he sent messengers throughout the land to summon his judges to his side. And the wise men came to him from all parts of the realm. For he willed to have the trial of Ganelon the traitor.

Charles had not been long in his palace at Aix when there came a fair lady into his presence. It was Alda, the sister of Oliver, and the love of Roland. She stepped before the chair of Charles and said—

“Sire, why has Roland not returned with thee?”

When the King heard these words his heart was filled with sorrow, and he said—

“Sister, dear friend, he is dead whom thou askest for; but thou shalt have of me another in his stead. I will give thee my son Louis, who is my heir, and will be King of this realm.”

“Thou tellest strange things, O King. God and the saints forbid that I should live if Roland is dead!”

Alda's cheek grew pale as marble, and she sank at the feet of Charles. The King rose from his seat and raised her in his arms, for his heart was full of pity, and he tried

to revive her. But Alda's soul had fled. And when the Emperor saw that she was dead, he sent for four noble ladies to bear her body to the cloister.

III.

It was the Day of St. Sylvester that Charles appointed for the trial of Ganelon. And he sat upon his royal seat surrounded by his judges. Then by the King's command was Ganelon led forth. He came with a stately step and a proud look, as if he had been a true knight. And thirty of his kinsmen walked beside him. And he opened his mouth and spake thus in his own defence—

“Listen to me, barons, for the love of God. I am no traitor. I have always loved and served the Emperor as a loyal knight; but his nephew Roland hated me, and sought to bring about my death by sending me as a messenger to Marsile. I escaped the trap he laid for me by my own craftiness, and took vengeance on Roland.”

When the judges heard the words of Ganelon they said—

“Let us consider what he has said.”

And Ganelon said to one of his kinsmen, Pinabel of Sorence—

“Kinsman, I claim thy aid.”

Pinabel promised to perform the duties of a kinsman, and to befriend him with his tongue and with his sword. Pinabel spoke many persuading words to the judges, and they gave heed to him. And afterwards they took counsel together, and said—

“Let us beg the Emperor to pardon Ganelon for this time. Roland is dead, and can never come back again. Why should more blood be shed on his account?”

And all the judges agreed save Thierry, the brother of Geoffrey.

And the judges went to Charles and said, “We pray thee, sire, to acquit Ganelon. Let him live; he is a noble knight. Roland is dead, and nothing can bring him back to life.”

When Charles heard their words he was exceedingly wroth, and he said—

“You are all felons together!”

Then Thierry, brother of the Duke of Anjou, stepped forth and said—

“Sire, listen to me. I agree not with the sentence of the others. This is my sentence. Let Ganelon be hanged, and his body be cast into the flames, for he is a felon. If any of his kinsmen give me the lie, I am ready to meet him with the sword.”

The Franks shouted, “Thierry has spoken well.”

But Pinabel came forward and said to the Emperor, “Thierry has given judgment against my kinsman. I give him the lie, and I offer him battle.”

He drew forth his glove and gave it to the Emperor. Charles took the glove, and said—

“Thirty of Ganelon’s kinsmen must be given up to me as bail, to be kept by me until the right is determined by the battle.”

IV.

All things were made ready for the combat between Pinabel and Thierry by Ogier of Ardennes. First of all did the knights confess their sins to the priest, and they heard mass and left great gifts to the Church in case of death. Then they buckled on their bright armour, and placed their shields upon their arms, and took up their great spears, and mounting their swift steeds, they rode swiftly to a grassy plain near Aix, where Charles sat surrounded by thousands of his Franks, who had come to view the combat between Pinabel and Thierry.

The two knights placed their spears at rest and rode against one another. The spear of Pinabel struck Thierry to the ground, but that of Thierry struck Pinabel to the ground. But both knights arose unhurt from the green grass on which they had fallen, and fought with their swords. They struck furious blows at one another, and the Franks looked on in wondrous awe, and Charles exclaimed—

“O God in heaven, make it clear who is right!”

As they fought Pinabel said to Thierry, "Yield to me and I will give thee gold and wealth. I wish thee no evil. But I wish to gain Ganelon's pardon from the King."

"Never," said Thierry. "God shall decide between thee and me to-day."

And they fought again. But there was no hatred in their hearts towards one another. And Thierry said to Pinabel—

"Thou art a brave and stately knight. All know thee to be a true knight, and Charles will receive thee ; only justice must be done on the traitor Ganelon."

But Pinabel said, "God forbid that I should desert my kinsman ! I will rather die."

And again they fought more furiously than before, and one could see they did not mean to part till one or other lay dead.

And Pinabel smote Thierry a great blow, which fell on his shield ; and the sparks of fire came from it, and the sharp steel passed over his right cheek and wounded him, and clove his hauberk. The knight was wounded, and the blood flowed upon the green grass. But God saved his life. And Thierry lifted his sword, and returned to avenge the blow. He aimed a blow which fell upon Pinabel's head, and cleft both helmet and head. Then were all amazed, and they said one to another—

"This is God's miracle."

When King Charles saw that Thierry had conquered he was exceedingly glad, and he came towards him with a multitude of his knights and embraced him, and he wiped the blood off his face with his sable robes. And he commanded that his armour should be taken off, and that he should be clothed in new garments. This they did; and they set him upon a mule of Arabia, and led him towards the city as conqueror.

When they returned to the city the Emperor again took his seat on the place of judgment, and having summoned his dukes and counts, he asked them the question—

“What is to be done to the captives—the kinsmen of Ganelon who gave themselves up as hostages for Pinabel?”

The Franks replied, “Not one of them must be allowed to live.”

Then Charles called the Provost Basbrun, and said to him—

“Basbrun, go and hang the kinsmen of Ganelon upon that gallows-tree; and if one escape, by my white beard, you shall die.”

Basbrun did as he was commanded, and Ganelon's thirty kinsmen were hanged. Not one escaped.

King Charles then took counsel with his barons about Ganelon, and they all advised that Ganelon should die a fearful death. Then were four wild horses brought

forth, and the four limbs of Ganelon were fastened every one to a wild horse. The grooms urged the horses to the gallop, and Ganelon was torn asunder, and the green grass was covered with his blood. Thus Ganelon died a traitor's death, that none might ever afterwards make a boast of treason.

V.

When the Emperor was finished taking vengeance on the guilty, he called for the bishops of France, of Bavaria, and of Germany, and he said—

“There is in my house a prisoner of noble race; she has listened to holy sermons, and she now wishes to be baptized. That God may save her soul baptize her, I pray you.”

Willingly replied the bishops, “Find thou godmothers for her, and let them be noble dames and of high lineage.”

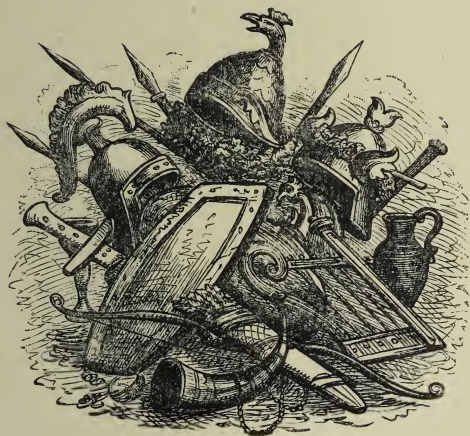
Great was the company that assembled at the Baths of Aix on the day of the baptism of the Queen of Spain. And they gave her as her new name Julienne, and she became Christian.

When all was over and the evening came, the King retired to his couch within his vaulted chamber. And while he slept God's angel Gabriel came to him with God's message, saying—

“Charles, Charles, assemble the armies of the realm and march to Bire, to succour King Vivien in the town of Imphe, for there are the Christians besieged by a great host of pagans. Sorely do they need thine aid.”

And when the Emperor heard the words of the angel he wept and tore his white beard, saying—

“Alas, what a life of toil and pain is mine!”



WALTER AND HILDEGUND.

WALTER AND HILDEGUND.

I.

IT entered into the heart of the proud King of the Huns, Etzel, to make himself the master of the world. He subdued many nations under him, and he caused many of the kings of Germany to pay him tribute, and to honour him as lord. And now his thoughts turned towards the great kingdom of the Franks, and he said in his heart, "This kingdom also I shall subdue unto myself."

Now the King of Franks was named Gibicho, and he lived in Worms on the Rhine. And there came swift messengers to Worms, who said to him—

"My lord, we are bearers of evil tidings. The Huns are coming up from the lands of the Danube; and in number they are as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand on the seashore."

When Gibicho heard the tidings of the messengers, he summoned a council in haste, and asked of his counsellors what he ought to do. They answered with one voice—

“My lord, we cannot stand against the Huns. Let us offer them hostages, and beg for peace.”

Now the King had to find a hostage of noble birth to send to the King of the Huns. His own son Gunther he could not send; for he was yet a babe on his mother's breast. He took a brave noble boy named Hagen, whose forefathers came from Troy, and him he sent, along with much treasure, to the camp of Etzel. And he commanded his messengers to sue for peace.

Etzel was well pleased when he saw the rich gifts of the King of the Franks, and he received the messengers graciously, as was his wont, and he granted to King Gibicho the peace which he desired.

Etzel and his host then passed onward, plundering and burning in the lands through which they went. The earth trembled under the multitude of the horses' hoofs; and the clouds of dust which arose were so great that the sun could no longer be seen. They crossed the Rhine, and went into the realm of Burgundy.

There King Herrich reigned, and he was at Châlons, and was living secure and at his ease, for he knew not that trouble was near. Presently the watcher on the tower shouted with a great voice—

“I see clouds of dust, and I see bright weapons flashing. Shut the gate with speed; for a mighty host of enemies is near!”

There also came swift messengers to Châlons from

the land of the Franks, and they told the King all that had taken place in the land of the Franks.

Then King Herrich called his counsellors, and they took counsel together. At length the King said—

“It is vain for us to hope to withstand the Huns. The Rhine-Franks have not dared to oppose them, and we have been often vanquished by the Rhine-Franks. Let us then beg for peace. We must pay tribute, and, should it be needful, my only child, the sweet Hildegund, shall be given up as a hostage!”

Afterwards the ambassadors of the King of Burgundy journeyed to the camp of Etzel. They went weaponless, and with bowed heads and in humble guise they entered the tent of the proud King of the Huns.

Etzel sat upon a throne, and around him were many of his heroes. The ambassadors of Burgundy stepped before the King and said—

“O King, we beseech thee, cease from the wild work of war, and grant us peace!”

Etzel replied graciously, and said—

“The Huns rejoice to add to the number of their friends; but those who will not submit to their power must feel its might. If your king comes to me with offers of peace, it shall not be denied him.”

The messengers withdrew, and went back to the King Herrich, who, when he heard their words, made haste and gathered together much treasure, golden ornaments, and precious stones, and went to the camp of Etzel.

He took with him also his most precious treasure, his little daughter Hildegund, that he might leave her as a hostage. Alas, he knew not if he should ever see her face again!

Etzel granted peace to Herrich, marched forth from his kingdom, and then went with his destroying horde into the land of the Goths. The king who ruled over Aquitain was named Alphere, a rich and noble king. He had one son, a boy named Walter; and this boy was betrothed to King Herrich's only daughter Hildegund, who was to bring as her dowry to Walter the kingdom of Burgundy.

When it came to the ears of King Alphere that the Huns had overcome the strong kingdom of the Goths, and Burgundy likewise, his heart filled with heavy care; and he said to his counsellors—

“Oh, what avail is it to prepare for war? Can we accomplish what the kingdom of the Franks did not attempt, and what Burgundy did not do? I cannot stop the course of the conqueror by arms, but I shall send him great treasures, and offer my only child as a hostage!”

This King Alphere did, and his gifts were accepted by Etzel, who granted him peace. The little boy Walter Etzel kept as a hostage.

Having thus gained much booty, Etzel and his armies returned to their homes in the Danube lands.

II.

On his return to his own land, King Etzel cared well for the hostages which he had brought with him. The boy Walter he treated as if he had been his own son, and the maiden was handed over to the care of his Queen Helche. And God in heaven caused Hildegund to find favour in the eyes of her mistress, and the maiden was prudent and diligent. And the Queen loved her and trusted her, and she gave the keys into her keeping of the treasures, and she was advanced in honour above all the other maidens of the Queen.

The boy Walter grew up to manhood, and was brave and strong, and excelled in warlike exercises, and there was none like to him for strength and courage among those around King Etzel. And the King made him the leader of his armies.

After this it came to pass that King Gibicho, the King of the Franks of the Rhine, died, and his son Gunther reigned in his stead. And Hagen, who had been given to Etzel as a hostage while still a boy, heard the tidings that King Gibicho was dead, and he longed to return and see his own land and the new king. And lo, suddenly he disappeared; and they sought for him, but could not find him. And none knew whither he had gone, save Walter only.

When Queen Helche heard the tidings of the flight of Hagen, she went to the King and said—

“Take heed, O King, lest the pillars of thy wide realm be shaken. Thou hast committed the leading of thy armies to the young hostage Walter, and all men look upon him as a tower of strength to the Huns. But I fear lest the example of Hagen lead him to flee to his home. I will tell thee how thou canst keep him. Next time he comes into thy presence, speak to him gracious words, and say—

“‘Walter, thou wert but a boy when I brought thee into the land of the Huns, but now thou art a strong man. Thou hast not spared limb or life in my service, and many lands I owe to thy sword. I wish now to reward thee for all thy toils; choose, I pray thee, a bride; there are many rich princesses among the Huns, choose whom thou wilt, and thou shalt have her, and many broad lands for a dowry.’

“If thou canst persuade him to love one of our Hunnish maidens, thou shalt assuredly fetter him to our land for ever.”

The counsel pleased the King well; and he sent for Lord Walter, and spoke to him all the words which the Queen had advised. Now Walter was prudent, and he saw the purpose of the King, and he answered him—

“Great is thy goodness, my Lord King, that thou dost so richly acknowledge my humble services. I am thine for ever; and my one desire is to enlarge thy kingdom. But it is too early for me to rest at home. Nothing rejoices my heart so much as bold deeds in

the battlefield. I listen for my King's word, and follow wherever he calls ; and it is better for me to have no sweet wife and tender children to keep me back from the wars. Let me, O King, remain free and ready to go at thy command, for thou art not only my Lord and King, but my true father."

The words of the young hero pleased King Etzel, and he did not urge him more ; for he said, "My faithful Walter will not desert his Lord." But Walter was deceiving Etzel by his words.

III.

Tidings reached Etzel's chief city that a neighbouring people, whom his sword had lately subdued, were risen in sudden revolt. Walter gathered together the forces of the King in haste. They mounted their horses, and drew their weapons, and Walter spoke to his men bold words of cheer. "Remember," he said, "our victories of old, and let us repeat them now. The people against whom we are going were all subdued by our swords. We must destroy all who rise up against us ; for it is the duty of all the nations of the earth to obey the Huns."

Then Walter and his men galloped away to find the enemy. Before long they came upon them encamped at no great distance on the plain. Quickly the battle

began. At first arrows and lances filled the air as the snow-flakes in winter; and afterwards each man drew his sword, and rode against the foe. Before the Hunnish host rode Walter. Wherever he rode was wide passage made in the ranks of the enemy; for he mowed down all that came in his way. The foemen fled before him as if he had been Death himself. They soon saw they could not endure the attacks of the Huns and their young leader. They turned their backs and gave their horses rein.

With great booty Walter and his men returned to the land of the Huns, singing joyful songs of victory as they rode along.

Walter hastened to the dwelling of Etzel. The servants ran joyfully forth to meet him, and held his stirrup, and they asked him eagerly, "How has the battle gone, Lord Walter?"

He soon satisfied them, and entered hastily into the King's house. But as he passed through one of the halls he met Hildegund. Now Hildegund was the maiden to whom he had been betrothed, and whom he still loved; although he had never talked to her of love.

He went up to her and kissed her lips, and said—

"Fair maiden, give me to drink, for I perish of thirst." The maiden brought a golden flagon filled with wine of golden colour. She gave it to the youthful victor, who, having first crossed himself, drank it all. They then

clasped hands, and the maiden did not shrink away from him ; for she knew he was the lover to whom she had been betrothed long before.

Walter said to her, "How often have I been near thee, but never a word of love from your sweet lips hast thou granted to thy betrothed lover. Do give me a word of love to comfort me in this strange land."

Hildegund answered, saying, "Thy tongue is skilled to deceive. A princess of the Huns is to be thy bride. I am but a poor serving-maiden."

Walter replied, "Cease from such speeches, I pray thee, dear maiden. We are alone, and I may now speak to thee true and not feigned words."

Hildegund fell on her knees before Walter, and looking up to him with clasped hands, exclaimed—

"My Lord, command me as thou wilt. No one shall hinder me from obeying thy commands."

Walter lifted her gently from the ground, and said, "Knowest thou that I have long been wearied of my captivity, and desire to see my home again. I have had many opportunities of escaping, but how could I go without thee ; how could I leave thee, Hildegund, among the Huns ? Say, wilt thou follow me ?"

The maiden looked in his face with a loving look, and said—

"I wish nothing better than to follow thee. Whether it bring life or death, it is well. I live for thy love, and to die along with thee will be easy."

Walter whispered in her ear: "The Queen of the Huns has set thee over all her treasures, and committed to thee her keys. Listen, I pray thee, to what I now say to thee. Get for me the King's coat of mail which the cunning smith worked, and his strong helmet. Take two coffers and fill them to the brim with golden bracelets. Get ready also for me four pairs of strong shoes, and the same for thyself. And cause also a supply of fish hooks to be made, that we may catch fish and birds by the way.

"I shall arrange for a feast in honour of my victory, and shall invite the King and Queen and all the heroes. Beer and wine will be given in overflowing measure to the guests, and when they are buried in drink, and lie sleeping in the hall, it will be our opportunity to flee. Do thou scarcely touch the deceiving liquor at the feast, and I shall sip it only, for I will preserve my senses. And when the carousers are overcome with wine, we shall pray to the gods for a happy escape to our own land."

The day appointed for the feast arrived, and the hall was hung around with velvet, and richly adorned by Walter's command. A hundred tables stood groaning under the load of good things, and wine was there too in abundance. Vessels of gold gleamed upon the white table-cloths. The King and Queen entered the hall, and took their seats upon a throne covered with purple silk. The other guests sat down, and the feast began. Walter's voice was heard urging all to eat and drink of

the feast he had prepared for them. When all had finished eating, the tables were removed, and the women left the hall, as the custom was.

Walter now approached the King of the Huns, and said, "Lord Etzel, I have a boon to crave of thee. If thou lookest upon me with favour, pray do thou begin the drinking this evening. Walter bore in his hand a huge golden bowl on which were carved the brave deeds of the olden time. It was filled with golden wine, and Walter gave it into the hand of the King, saying—

"It was the fashion in old times to reckon him a poor creature who could not empty this bowl. Thou art worthy, O King of thy fathers. Drink the wine in this bowl, and shame on him who does not follow thy example."

The heroes laughed and shouted when they heard Walter's words. The King, nothing loath, took the bowl from his hands, and holding it in both his hands, he raised it slowly to his lips and drank, and when he set it down again it was empty. "Follow my example," shouted the King.

The bowl was empty, but the King's head was heavy. Not unwilling were the heroes to follow the example of their King. And the attendants carried the bowl from hero to hero, filling it quickly. Soon the hall became a scene of drunken disorder. They sang, they wept, and they talked wildly. But after a time silence began to reign in the hall, for all the heroes had sunk into a

drunken sleep. Lord Walter alone stood upright in the hall, and looked around by the light of the blazing torches. Had he in that hour taken a torch in hand and set fire to the house, no one would have known who did the deed.

He left the hall and went into the court-yard where Hildegund was waiting him. He then went to the stable and fetched from it the best horse in the stalls. It was named Lion, and it deserved the name. He brought it saddled and bridled, and on its sides he hung the coffers filled with golden bracelets, and the other articles for the way which Hildegund had brought. Walter clad himself in the armour; and the maiden stood at the horse's bridle, and in her other hand she carried the fishing-rods. When all was ready they walked with quick steps through the darkness, and left the land of the Huns.

When the morning dawned they left the open country, and went into the thick wood; for they feared to be overtaken if they travelled by day, and there they waited until the evening shadows fell. They went not through the towns or villages, nor by cultivated fields, but crept silently through the thick woods and lonely valleys.

IV.

The Huns lay sleeping in the banqueting hall until they were awakened by the rays of the afternoon sun.

They looked round for their entertainer, for they wished to thank him for his gallant feast, but Walter was nowhere to be seen. Etzel now arose from his throne; and he held his head in his hands, for it ached badly. He called Walter's name loudly, for he wished to tell him how badly his head felt. Walter answered not.

Presently his Queen entered the hall. She exclaimed—

“Unhappy day! Alas, the pillar of our kingdom is gone! What I warned thee of is come to pass. Walter is flown, and with him Hildegund. In vain I looked for her this morning to bring me my clothes. She came not. Greatly do I fear that the deceitful man has outwitted us all.”

Etzel tore his hair when he heard the words of his wife. He who had been all joy yesterday, to-day wept tears of bitter sorrow. He became moody, and would not touch the food and wine they set before him. When the evening came he retired to his chamber, but he could not sleep, and he tossed on his couch the livelong night until the morning dawned. In the morning he called for the princes of his host, and said—

“Oh that some one would bring back that faithless Walter! If he brought him dead, I should not mind. With gold and much treasure shall that man be rewarded who makes him a captive and avenges our wrong.”

The princes and counts listened to the King's words. They were brave men, and had gained much glory in

battles far and near. But not one of them offered to do the King's errand; they knew the might of Walter's sword, and they knew they could not stand before him. Thus it came to pass that Walter escaped from the land of the Huns, and no one followed after him.

V.

For six weeks Walter and Hildegund travelled. They avoided the abodes of men, and travelled only in the night season while all men slept. Their food was the fishes and the birds which they caught, and the berries of the wood. One evening as the sun was setting, they saw before them the Rhine, and Worms, the city of the Franks, where King Gunther reigned.

A ferryman took them over in his boat, and Walter gave him for his fare two fishes which he had caught in the Danube. The ferryman went afterwards into the town, and he sold the fishes to King Gunther's cook. When these fishes were placed before the King and he had tasted them, he exclaimed in wonder—

“Whence come these fishes? They were never caught in the Rhine.”

Those about him made inquiry, and they told the King that a boatman had brought them to the castle.

“Let him be sent for,” said the King. “He never caught those fishes in the Rhine.”

The boatman was sent for and questioned by the King. He replied—

“Late yesterday evening I lay in my boat on the other side of the Rhine. There came a noble traveller clad in complete armour. Behind him there walked a lovely maiden, who led a war-horse by the rein. When the horse shook its mane, I could hear the rattle of gold and precious stones in the coffers which it bore on its back. This hero gave me the fishes which I brought here.”

Now Hagen sat at the table beside King Gunther. He laughed when he heard the boatman's words, and said—

“My friends, here is good news, surely. Wish me joy to-day; it is my friend and comrade Walter, who has escaped from the Huns.”

Then all the heroes who sat at table rejoiced at Walter's escape; only Gunther rejoiced not, but said—

“Wish me joy that I have lived to see this day. All the treasures in Walter's coffers are mine. God from heaven has sent back to the Franks all the tribute which for so many years we have sent to the Huns. Quick, knaves! fetch me my steed from the stable.”

The King also bade twelve of his most faithful followers accompany him. He thought they would be needed to carry the treasure. Among those whom he summoned to follow him was Hagen. Now Hagen was ever obedient to the command of the King; neverthe-

less he loved his old friend Walter, and was unwilling to do him harm. But he followed the King, in the hope that he would be able to dissuade him from the strife with Walter.

Gunther and his followers rode swiftly forth from the gates of Worms. They were all armed, and as they were twelve against one, they did not doubt that they should be able to rob Walter of his treasure.

Walter and Hildegund journeyed together until they reached a wild place, named the Forest of the Vosges. Around were thick woods inhabited by wild beasts. In this wilderness there rose two mountains, and between them lay a cave which the rocks overarched. And there was much green grass in the place. Robbers knew it well. When the hero saw this place of refuge, he said—

“Let us rest awhile here, for I am weary. No one can harm us as we abide in this place.”

Seldom had Walter slept during their journeyings; for he had watched over the maiden while she slept with his armour on, and his sword in hand. But now he was very weary, and he took off his armour and lay down; and he said to Hildegund—

“Keep thou watch, beloved, on the crest of the hill, and shouldst thou see clouds of dust, or men, come and waken me from slumber. Thou canst see far with thy pure eyes. Oft have I kept watch over thee. Watch for me this time.”

Walter fell asleep, and the maiden kept watch as he had commanded.

Gunther and his men were riding fast after the fugitives. They had fallen upon the traces of the hoofs of Walter's horse, and they were following hard after them. As they rode together, Hagen said to Gunther—

“Pardon me, O King, if I speak a word of caution. Thou knowest not Walter as I know him. Hadst thou seen Walter in battle as I have seen him, and the deeds he has done, thou wouldst not think it an easy matter to take his treasure. Do not, O lord and friend, run the risk of meeting a foe like Walter. The man lives not who can meet the shock of his spear.”

Hagen spake these words to Gunther, but the King would not listen to him, nor be persuaded. And they were now near to the cave where Walter slept.

Hildegund saw them coming, and she ran to Walter and awoke him with a touch of her hand. He said—

“Comes there a stranger?”

“Alas!” replied the maid, “a whole host cometh up against us.”

Walter rubbed his eyes, for they were heavy with sleep, and he quickly put on his armour and took his sword.

“It is the Huns!” cried the terrified maid. “Slay me, Walter, with thy sword, that I fall not into their hands.”

But Walter replied—

“If I were to stain my sword with thy innocent blood, it should fail in the conflict with the foe. Cease from such a prayer, beloved, and put away vain fears. He who has shielded me in many dangers will be my Protector now should the Huns come upon us.”

Walter then went forth, and looked upon the advancing horsemen. The hero had sharp eyes, and when he saw them, he said—

“Thou art wrong, Hildegund. These are no Huns, but the Franks of the Rhine, the Nibelungs. And I see among them the helmet of my old comrade Hagen. Walter went forth from the opening of the cave, and as he looked at the coming troop, he exclaimed, “I vow no Frank shall ever go home with a whole head, and boast that he had robbed me of my treasures.” But as he spoke these proud words he repented of them, and quickly he bowed the knee to Heaven to beg for pardon and help.

He rose again, and eyeing the heroes who were riding towards the cave, he said, “One only of these do I fear, and that is Hagen. We have often fought together in the lists. He knows my ways of fighting and all my arts, and he can fight well. If he does not fight against me, all will go well. I shall return safe to thee, my sweet bride.”

When Hagen saw his old friend and comrade Walter standing at the entrance of the cave, he said to King Gunther—

“Here will numbers be of no use. One only can fight with him who stands at that narrow entrance. Do not needlessly, my lord, encounter that strong fighter, however anxious you may be for his treasure ; but first send to him a herald to ask who he is, and what is his name. Perhaps he will give up the treasure quietly, and we shall leave no dead men here.”

The counsel pleased King Gunther well, and he bade Ortwein of Metz go forward and speak with the hero at the mouth of the cave. Ortwein did the King's bidding, and when he was within hearing, he called to Walter, and said, “Let us know thy name, young hero. Whence comest thou, and to what land art thou journeying ?”

Walter replied, “Dost thou ask these questions for thyself, or has another sent thee ?”

“I am the messenger of King Gunther, the King of this land,” said Ortwein.

“Why trouble a weary stranger with questions when he is leaving your land. But the stranger must bear much, and I shall not refuse to answer the questions of thy master. My name is Walter, and I belong to Aquitain. My father sent me, when still a boy, as a hostage to the Huns. I am returning home. With the Franks of the Rhine I wish to be at peace.”

Ortwein answered, “Send to my master the fair maid who is with thee, the coffers full of gold which thy horse bears, and thou shalt be permitted to go in peace, and with a whole skin.”

Lord Walter replied in fierce wrath, "How like a fool thou speakest! Is thy King a god, that he can bestow life or death with a word? Or do I lie a captive in his dungeons? But listen to me, good hero. Thy master has come hither to give me battle, that I can see. If he will depart in peace, I shall give him a hundred golden bracelets. This shall he have as a tribute to his royal name."

Ortwein returned to his master with this message. When Hagen heard it, he said to Gunther—

"Take, I beseech thee, what Walter offers. Thou shalt then be able richly to reward thy followers, and shalt avoid a conflict, from which it will be hard for thee to come forth victor. I had a dream last night, and it was not of victory. I thought a wild bear was fighting with thee. Long did you fight together, and at length the fierce beast tore thy thigh, and thou layest in sore pain. I hastened to thy help, but the beast rose against me, and knocked out six of my teeth and one of my eyes. Avoid, I pray thee, O King, this strife."

Gunther answered scornfully, "Thou dost resemble, Hagen, thy father Aldrian. His cold breast was always full of vain fears; and by means of fair words he was accustomed to escape from fighting."

Hagen's soul was filled with wrath when he heard the unjust words of his King, and he said—

"To-day thou shalt fight alone, and without my aid. I shall wait the issue here. He sprang from his horse,

and leaning upon his shield he stood alone as an on-looker.

Gunther sent his herald back to Walter. "Say to him," said Gunther, "that I demand from him the whole of his treasure. If he denies it, thou hast a strong hand, take it by force."

Ortwein of Metz rode quickly to the cave again to deliver his lord's message. His armour gleamed in the moonlight as he rode along.

"Send to the King of the Franks," he shouted, "thy whole treasure. If thou dost so, he will show himself gracious towards thee; but if thou refusest, thou shalt die."

Walter, still wishing to make peace, answered, "What treasure do I have of the King of the Franks, that I should restore it? Have I stolen anything from King Gunther? Or did he ever lend me money? Have I plundered or laid waste his land as I rode through it? Is this land so inhospitable to strangers that they dare not rest foot upon it? But I am willing to pay toll, and good toll too, for my passage through your land. I will send two hundred golden bracelets to your King if he will be satisfied, and allow me to go in peace."

But Ortwein had the heart of a wolf, and he answered rudely, "Open thy coffers. Let me have all thy gold. Quickly, I say; I am not to stand here all day bargaining like an old woman. If thou refuse, I shall take thy life."

Scarcely had he spoken these words, when he flung a lance with all his force at Walter. The young hero sprang aside, and avoided the steel, which fell harmless on the ground.

Walter shouted in scorn, "Wilt thou have an exchange?" and so saying, he threw his spear at the foe. It struck the left side of Ortwein's shield, and then it pierced his hand, which was then seeking his sword, and passing through it, it pierced his thigh. His thigh it also penetrated, and lodged itself in the horse's back. In vain the wounded Frankish knight sought to extricate the spear. The sword of Walter in another moment finished what his spear had begun, and horse and rider fell dead together on the plain.

The Franks saw Ortwein fall, and they cried out in rage; but most of all grieved Skaramund, the nephew of Ortwein. Bitter were the tears he shed when his uncle fell, and he shouted, "It is mine to avenge his death." Without waiting for commands or aid, the rash youth rushed towards the mouth of the cave where Lord Walter stood. He brandished a spear in both hands, and when he saw Walter standing at the cave mouth, calm and fearless, he exclaimed, "Whence this confidence? In what dost thou trust? I come not to claim thy treasure, but to avenge my uncle's death." Walter replied—

"If I began this strife, or if any deed of mine excuses

this treatment, I give thee leave to pierce my heart with thy spear."

Skaramund launched first one and then a second lance at Walter. The first he avoided, the second he caught upon his shield. Quickly Skaramund drew his sword and rode at full gallop against Walter. But the fierce blows which he struck only made the sparks fly from Walter's helmet, and did not injure the hero's head. Skaramund sought to draw back his horse, but before he could do so, the sword of Walter smote him, and he fell dead beside his uncle.

Gunther and his companions saw the death of the young hero, and Gunther shouted in wrath, "Upon him again! he must now be wearied with fighting, and it will be easy to overcome him."

At the word of the King another hero made towards the narrow opening where Lord Walter stood. He who went was a hero named Werinhard. He came from Xanten, and was of ancient Trojan stock. He went not against Walter with a spear in his hand as the other heroes had done, but with a bow and arrows. He shot one arrow after another at the young hero, who stood at the mouth of the cave; but they hurt him not, for Walter caught them on his shield. At last Werinhard shot his last arrow, and he gazed eagerly at Walter, for he hoped to see him dead or wounded; but the hero stood erect, looking at him scornfully and laughing aloud.

Werinhard exclaimed—

“Thou art skilled in avoiding arrows, but thou shalt now feel the strength of my arm.”

Walter laughed scornfully, and said, “Thou hast been long in coming within length of my arm. Come near, and thou shalt not have to complain that I am slow to meet you.”

Thereupon Walter flung his spear with both his hands at the advancing enemy. It struck his horse, and the horse that was bounding swiftly along fell pierced to the heart, and his rider fell with him. Walter sprang forward and snatched the sword out of the hand of the prostrate knight. Then taking off his helmet, he wound his yellow hair around his left hand. He raised his right hand to strike. The Frank begged for mercy. But Lord Walter said, “What mercy didst thou show when thou didst shoot arrows at me from afar?” So saying, he smote off his head with his sword.

Other heroes went up against Walter. Ekefried, he who fled from his own land because of a bitter blood-feud, assayed in vain to slay the defender of the cave, and met at Walter's hand a doom he had escaped by flight. After him four other heroes went one by one along the bloody path to their doom.

One of those who went up against Walter was Patafried, the nephew of Hagen. And when Hagen saw his sister's son going up against Walter, he exclaimed, “Foolish boy, whither runnest thou? Death is laughing

at thee. The Norn will kill thee. Thinkest thou, foolish boy, to measure thyself with Walter?" But the youth would not listen to his uncle's words. Hagen exclaimed in grief—

"O hateful avarice! thou demandest a heavy toll. Source of countless evils! Human victims dost thou demand. Through thee do many run to death, and to the fires of hell. Farewell, fair youth. But how shall I tell it to thy mother?"

But the youth hearkened not to his uncle's words, but rushed to death.

There remained now with Gunther only four heroes besides Hagen, who sat alone on the stone: the rest lay dead near the entrance of the cave. Those who remained said to the King—

"What profits this fighting? Let us ride back to Worms."

But the King became furious when he heard their words; for his heart was filled with greed and black hatred. He exclaimed—

"Shame on you all! Shall we tried warriors flee before a single man? Rather will I die than return home."

The heroes were ashamed when they heard the words of the King, and one of them, whose name was Helmnot, armed himself with a huge three-pronged fork, to which he fastened a rope. He wished to throw it on Walter's shield, and make him defenceless. He then advanced

against him, and the other three followed close at his heels to support him. As he drew near, Helmnot threw the huge weapon through the air, exclaiming—

“This will give thee thy death, foolish knave.”

The fork flew through the air, and as a serpent descends from a tree upon its victim, it came down upon Walter, and its teeth stuck fast in Walter's shield.

The Franks shouted so loudly with joy that the woods and rocks resounded. They flung away their shields and weapons, and, seizing the rope, they pulled hard together to bring down Walter to the ground. They exclaimed—

“He is caught. We shall catch him like a wild beast!”

But suddenly Walter loosened himself from his shield, and let it go; and they who were pulling the rope fell to the ground. Walter came swiftly upon them with his avenging sword. The first he reached was Helmnot, whose head he clove in twain with one stroke. The other three who followed him shared the same fate. King Gunther barely escaped with his life; but when he saw the deeds of Walter, he ran swiftly back to where his horse stood, and mounting, he rode in haste to where Hagen sat alone.

VI.

When Hagen saw King Gunther riding towards him to ask his aid, he spoke wrathfully, and said—

“I am like my father Aldrian, my lord. Vain fears fill my cold breast. I am not fit for battles. You said so yourself. Seek for a helper elsewhere; for I tremble at the sight of a naked sword.”

Gunther replied—

“Do not reproach me with my rash words, Hagen, in an hour like this. When we get home, I shall make atonement for these thoughtless words which I spoke in anger. I will pay for them with rich gifts. Think not of them now, but think rather of your comrades lying in their blood. Help me to avenge them, Hagen, as thou art a faithful man.”

Hagen remained silent. He thought of his youthful days when he and Walter were comrades, and how often they had sworn eternal friendship to one another. But again he thought of his dead comrades at the mouth of the cave, and of his nephew slain before his eyes. He hesitated what he should do. King Gunther marked his hesitation, and he begged and prayed of him more earnestly not to desert his King in his hour of bitter need.

At length Hagen broke silence, and said—

“Wherefore dost thou tempt thy faithful servant to

ruin. I obey thy command. But whither? Is he a brave man or a fool who leaps into an abyss? I know Prince Walter well. He stands yonder at the narrow opening; and were the whole army of Franks—horse and foot—to go up against him, they could not touch him there, for only one can fight at once. But as I see that the shame of this disaster overwhelms thee, I shall take compassion on thee. My nephew's slaughter moves me to espouse thy quarrel. But, believe me, my lord, this place is not good for us to fight. Let us leave it. Lord Walter will imagine that we have fled from fear. But let us watch him from a distance, and when he comes out into the open country, then shall we return and give him battle."

The counsel pleased King Gunther well, and he embraced Hagen and kissed him, and thanked him for his fidelity. They rode off together quickly, and they found a shady place in the woods, where there was much green grass. There they turned their horses loose to feed, and they themselves kept watch on the cave where Walter still abode with Hildegund.

The sun set, and the shades of evening fell. The moon alone lighted up hill and dale. Walter stood in his cave lost in thought. He was considering whether he should pass the night in the cave, or endeavour to escape homewards through the wild wastes under the cover of the darkness. Long he stood doubting. It was as if his soul was swaying upon the sea. He had watched

the meeting between Gunther and Hagen, and he had seen how Gunther gave Hagen a kiss. This he interpreted to mean that the King and Hagen had laid some plan together to destroy him. After he had considered much and long, he said—

“Here shall I remain until the morning dawn. Never shall the proud King be able to say that Walter stole away like a thief in the night.”

But as he moved beside the mouth of the cave, his eye caught the faces of the dead men whom he had slain on which the moonlight was shining. He knelt down beside the dead, and he placed the severed heads beside the bodies, and wept bitter tears. Then turning towards the east, he prayed in a voice choked with sobs, “O Thou who art the world’s Creator, who knowest and seest all things, I thank Thee that Thou hast shielded my head this day in the battle. Now I beseech Thee in behalf of those who lie dead. Thou forgivest the sinner, though Thou dost punish the sin. Grant that I may meet in Thy heavenly kingdom all those who have perished to-day by my sword.”

After he had so prayed, he went and brought together those of the horses of his foemen which were still alive and beside the cave. And he fastened them with cords. Then he entered the cave, and he took off the heavy armour which he had worn so long. And he went to Hildegund and spoke to her in glad joyous tones, for he wished to quiet the anxious fears of the maiden.

Walter found wine and bread in the coffers in the cave, and they ate and drank and were refreshed, then Walter laid his weary limbs upon his shield, and said—

“Beloved, watch thou the first part of the night while I sleep. The second part I shall watch myself, for then will the danger be greater.”

The maiden did as Walter bade her, and she sat by his head singing softly to herself, while Walter slept.

When the first watch of the night was past Walter arose, and he bade Hildegund now rest. She slept, and he kept watch, leaning on his lance. Sometimes he stood by the maiden’s head, and sometimes he went forth to view the horses. Many a look did he give to the eastern sky, for he longed for the dawn. At length he saw the morning star, and the grey dawn began to be visible. He then went to where the dead men lay, and took their armour and their shields and their bracelets of gold. But he stripped not the dead of their clothes. He placed upon the horses what he had taken. He mounted one horse himself, and he placed Hildegund upon another. He also took the rein of Lion, on whose back were the coffers of gold, and they rode away from the cave.

They had not ridden far when the timid maiden looked behind, and she saw two horsemen riding down the hill at full gallop. She exclaimed—

“Alas! the fate we have escaped so long is upon us at length. They come. Flee, Walter, flee!”

Lord Walter turned to look, and soon he recognised the pursuers. He said—

“I who have slain so many Franks shall not flee before two. Thou wouldst not have me exchange honour for shame. The danger threatens, but I hope our good fortune will not forsake us. Take a hold of Lion’s rein, and ride to the wood on the summit of yonder hill. I will engage the enemy. They shall have a good reception.”

The maiden did as she was told, and Walter with uplifted shield and lance in rest awaited the arrival of his enemies. When they came up with him they greeted him with scornful words, saying—

“We are glad to find you in the open plain. You were dangerous before, like a wild beast in its den. We shall now fight on more equal terms. Perhaps the end will not be like the beginning.”

Walter answered not the King with a single word; but turning towards Hagen he said—

“Where, Hagen, is all your ancient friendship for me? In the land of the Huns, before you fled, we parted with tears. You could hardly tear yourself away from me. Think on the days we were together as boys—how we played together, and went hand grasped in hand, and slept on the same bed at night. Confess that you are still my loving and faithful friend, and I shall fill the hollow of your shield with gold.”

Hagen listened with stern looks to Walter's words, and replied—

“Your words, Walter, are loving, but your deeds show hatred. It is you who have violated friendship. You slew my friends and comrades before my eyes. Say not that you knew not who they were; for you must have recognised the device on my shield. But I might have forgiven all but for one injury. My dearest flower you have taken from me; that pitiless sword of yours slew my nephew. I take none of your treasure, but I will have vengeance for my nephew's blood.”

Hagen then sprang from his horse, and Gunther followed his example. Walter dismounted too; for they were minded to fight on foot. It was not a fair and equal fight, for there were two against one.

Hagen began the battle by flinging a spear with all his might at Walter. Walter saw it coming, and received it on his shield; and the lance glanced off the shield as from polished marble, and sank deep into the earth.

King Gunther next flung an ashwood shaft at Walter. It stuck in his shield, but soon fell to the ground. The two Franks then drew their swords, and together attacked the brave Goth. But he kept them at a distance with his lance and shield, and they were not able to harm him with their short swords.

When they saw it was vain to try to hurt Walter with their swords, Gunther bethought himself of stratagem. The spear which he had already thrown lay sticking in

the earth not far from Walter's feet. Now Gunther made a sign to Hagen to distract the attention of Walter, while he endeavoured to recover his spear. Hagen engaged Walter sharply, while Gunther cautiously crept towards the place where his lance lay. But Walter was an observant as well as a brave fighter; and the movements of the King did not escape him. He drove Hagen back with a stroke, and springing back, he planted his left foot upon the lance which the King was about to recover; then raising his sword, he aimed a blow at Gunther, who was bending on his knees to seize the lance. The blow would have sent the King to hungry hell, had not Hagen sprang forward and sheltered him with his shield.

Pale, trembling, and as one arisen from the dead, Gunther staggered away.

The fight between the heroes lasted for six hours. The two Franks hoped that they would tire out Walter, and be at length able to overcome him. Walter saw their game and feared, and he said—

“Alas! I fear that if some good fortune does not visit me, their arts will at length overcome the wearied fighter.”

Wearied with standing so long under the hot sun defending himself, Walter determined to attack his foes. First he threw his spear at Hagen, and the weapon pierced the shield and his coat of mail, but did his person little harm.

He then rushed upon King Gunther, and with a blow of his sword struck aside his shield and cut off his leg. He raised the sword again to slay the prostrate foe, but Hagen rushed between them, and the sword descended upon his helmet ; but instead of cutting helmet or head, the sword broke and flew into pieces. In his anger, Walter forgot for a moment his prudence. He stretched out his hand in order to fling away the hilt of the broken sword. It was the last deed of Walter's right hand ; for Hagen, seeing his opportunity, brought down his sword, and smote off the right hand that had performed so many victorious deeds among the peoples of the earth.

Walter quailed not. Quickly he pushed the bloody stump into the hollow of his shield ; and with his left hand he drew from his right side the short Hunnish sword which hung there. With it he took terrible vengeance on his ancient friend ; for he stabbed his lip, broke his teeth, and cut out an eye.

The heroes were now so sorely wounded that they could fight no more. And Walter and Hagen sat down together on the grass, and renewed their ancient friendship. Beside them lay Gunther, for he was too sorely wounded to sit upright. The heroes strove to staunch the blood with grass and flowers ; but presently Walter shouted aloud to Hildegund to come. She came with a face pale with fear, but she bore in her hand linen to bind up the wounds of the heroes. She also brought out wine, and the

heroes drank together in token of their renewed friendship.

And the two heroes, although suffering sore pain, laughed and joked together as in former days. Hagen said to Walter—

“In the future, when you ride out to hunt, I would advise you to wear a leathern glove well filled with the stag’s hair. Men will believe you have two hands. There has been so much talk of your right hand, and all that it has done, that its imitation will be still feared. And you will have to introduce a new custom at your court. Everything will have to be done with the left hand; and he who puts his right arm round his wife will be reckoned a traitor.”

Walter was not behind in wit, and he said to Hagen—

“Henceforth, Trojan, you will be a king among the blind, for you have one eye.”

They sat together for long, and laughed and talked so that they forgot their pains.

Afterwards they lifted the lame King, and put him on a horse. Hagen led him back to Worms; but Walter and Hildegund journeyed onwards to Aquitain. There they were wedded, and there was a great wedding feast, to which many were bidden. For thirty years Walter continued to reign over the Goths, and he gained much renown by his deeds in peace and war.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER

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I.

THE stories contained in this book were at one time great favourites in Europe. Old and young listened to them with delight as they were sung or recited by the minstrels who went from town to town, and from castle to castle, to amuse people by singing to them songs of the brave deeds of their ancestors. But as time went on these songs were mostly forgotten, and scholars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could not have told you even the names of the stories which women and little children in country villages knew by heart in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

One reason that the stories were forgotten was that they were written in languages which after a time ceased to be understood. Gudrun, it is true, is written in German, and the "Song of Roland" is written in French; but if one who understands modern French and German tries to read Gudrun and Roland, he will find that a great deal in both is unintelligible to him. It is still harder

for an English scholar to understand Beowulf; for although we talk of Anglo-Saxon as the parent language of our present English, it must be studied as a foreign language if we would understand its ancient literature.

A second reason why the stories were forgotten was that they were not considered to be of much importance. Scholars and philosophers looked upon them as idle tales, good enough to amuse in old times sleepy knights in the winter evenings, but hardly worth writing down or translating into other languages in enlightened times. The consequence was that the stories were forgotten, and most copies of them perished.

In recent times copies of them have been recovered, and they have been carefully edited by scholars, and translated into modern languages. They are no longer despised as they used to be, and there are modern scholars who have spent their lives on the work of editing and making out the meaning of the old stories which pleased our ancestors. This is a much wiser spirit than the contempt that used to be felt for them.

All know that history is one of the most interesting and useful branches of human knowledge. The study of it helps us to understand our own times, and it often makes us wiser, more charitable, and more patient to read the history of the men and women who lived in old times, and of what befell them, of good and evil.

Now nothing gives us a better idea of the true

character of bygone times than the stories which the people of those times loved to hear. We not only gather from these stories how people dressed, and feasted, and fought. We see how they were governed, what and how they worshipped, and under what sort of laws they lived. Another thing we learn from such stories. We see what were the ideals of the people. We get to know what they thought beautiful and grand, not in dress and in manner alone, but in human action and character. The good knights and ladies who are the heroes of the tales show us what was most admired, while the evil characters show what actions and qualities were held in hatred and contempt. Although the tales are often fictitious, they contain in them much true character-painting. The poets, although speaking of men who had lived long before, or had never lived at all, really gave us pictures of their contemporaries. This is the case in modern novels; for novelists, even when professing to give an account of people who lived in different countries and times, often draw pictures of people who have been their own contemporaries, and whom they have known.

We may often gain moral instruction by reading of the men and women who lived in times when the world was younger than it is now. In this respect it is with periods of history as with the different periods in human life. The young have more to learn from the old than the old have to learn from the young; yet old people

may sometimes learn valuable lessons from children. We read in the New Testament that Christ on one occasion placed a child in the midst of a circle of grown-up people, and told them to learn of the little child. The times in which we live are wiser and more humane than the wild fighting days of which we read in Gudrun and in Roland. But now and then we come upon actions and words so true and tender, or upon traits of character so generous, that we feel surprised; and we are obliged to confess that our age has something to learn from the rude, reckless, yet open-handed and fearless heroes of other times.

The stories of Gudrun, of Beowulf, of Roland, and of Walter, will, I hope, interest English boys and girls. They are full of wild and terrible adventures, and stories of adventures are always favourites with the young. We all feel an interest in a person who has gone through strange and wild adventures. Shakespeare describes how Othello, who was a Moor like Siegfried in Gudrun, and, like him, wedded a fair Christian lady, gained her affections by telling the story of his adventures in her presence. When the Duke asks him how he, a Moor, was able to win the affections of such a fair lady, the Moor replies:—

“ Her father loved me ; oft invited me ;
Still questioned me the story of my life,
From year to year ; the battles, sieges, fortunes,
That I have passed.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,

To the very moment that he bade me tell it :
 Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
 Of moving accidents by flood and field ;
 Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach ;
 Of being taken by the insolent foe,
 And sold to slavery ; of my redemption thence,
 And portance in my travellers' history :
 Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
 Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
 It was my hint to speak,—such was the process ;
 And of the cannibals that each other eat,
 The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
 Do grow beneath their shoulders.

This to hear

Would Desdemona seriously incline :
 But still the house affairs would draw her hence :
 Which ever as she could with haste despatch,
 She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
 Devour up my discourse. Which I observing,
 Took once a pliant hour, and found good means
 To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart
 That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
 Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
 But not intently. I did consent,
 And often did beguile her of her tears,
 When I did speak of some distressful stroke
 That my youth suffered. My story being done,
 She gave me for my pains a world of sighs :
 She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange ;
 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful :
 She wished she had not heard it ; yet she wished
 That heaven had made her such a man : she thanked me,
 And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
 I should but teach him how to tell my story,
 And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake.
 She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
 And I loved her, that she did pity them.
 This only is the witchcraft I have used."

The heroes of northern stories have always the charm that they are men who passed through great adventures. They do not speak much, nor do they speak so well as the heroes of Greek and Roman stories, but they do great deeds. Their doings are terrible, and seem to surpass the strength of men, at all events of any men we have ever known. They are never tired of doing great deeds, but go from one deed of prowess to another, as if it were all sport. Terrible as their deeds are, they are not ill-natured. Cruel they sometimes are, but their cruelty seems to proceed from thoughtlessness, or at the worst, from sudden passion, not from settled malignity.

We must not forget, in reading such tales as Gudrun and Beowulf, that it is of our own ancestors we are reading. In our veins runs the same blood as in theirs; and the great German and English peoples are descended from the brave humorous heroes who held their own for so long against the Romans, and at length mastered the stern masters of the old world. Any story that gives a glimpse of the characters of the northern peoples in earlier days is in truth a bit of our own family history.

The three stories which I have named "The Story of Gudrun," "Hilda," and "Wild Hagen," are usually regarded as one poem, which is called "The Lay of Gudrun." Germans consider it one of the most beautiful poems in their language. Of all their ancient

poems one only is allowed to surpass it, and that is the "Nibelungenlied," or "Lay of the Nibelungs." It has often been said by Germans that the "Nibelungenlied" is the "Iliad" of Germany, and that "Gudrun" is its "Odyssey."

After long neglect the "Lay of Gudrun" was discovered among other old manuscripts in a castle in the Tyrol called Ambras. This castle belonged in the sixteenth century to the Emperor Maximilian I., who was a monarch that loved knightly sports and ways, and he loved, therefore, the old lays of the middle ages, with their tales of brave knights and fair ladies. By his command a copy was made of the "Lay of Gudrun," and this copy was discovered in the year 1820, and was published to the world. Since then it has been often edited and translated, and is a great favourite with old and young in Germany.

The poem as it at present stands was the work of a poet who lived about the beginning of the thirteenth century, but portions of it are certainly older. Some of the stories in it are perhaps as old as the days of the ancient German freedom, when the German people lived in their forests, and before the Romans came among them.

Wherever the poet of Gudrun lived, and it is likely he belonged to South Germany, the scene of his poem lies on the shores of the northern seas. The poet seemed to have thought of the land of the Hegelings

as lying near the western mouth of the river Scheldt. Daneland, where Horand ruled, was a part of the present Denmark; and perhaps by Seeland, the kingdom of Herwig, the poet meant the present province of Zealand. There seems to be no good reason for doubting that the poet meant by Ireland the Ireland of to-day; and a German scholar has pointed out that there is a town in Ireland called Ballygham, a name which bears some resemblance to Balian, the city and castle of Wild Hagen. It is not probable that the Normandy of the poet is the Normandy in France which we know. We must rather think of some land nearer to the land of the Hegelings.

The poem shows that the poet is speaking of a cold land where snow often fell thickly, and where in winter people did not venture much out of doors. Only when the spring days came round, and it was the merry month of May, did the heroes generally venture on the seas. One can see that the coming of spring was a great gladness. We feel it to be so even now, and we have much to make the winter days pass pleasantly. We have warm houses, plenty of light, books, newspapers, and indoor amusements of all kinds. These were for the most part wanting to those who lived long ago, and they must have felt it very weary to sit by the wood fire through the long evenings for weeks and months together without anything to do except perhaps to mend their armour or their fishing tackle. We

cannot wonder that they often longed for the coming of the May days.

A dislike of winter and longings for the coming of spring are to be found in many poems of the middle ages beside Gudrun. We find it often in the poems of the most beautiful lyric poet of the middle ages, Walther von der Vogelweide. In one place he writes :—

“ Upon us all hath winter brought its woes.
Forests and fields are dark, their verdure gone.
The sweet song cometh from the wood no more.
Once on the meadows maidens tossed the ball,
And in the forest glades the small birds sang.
Oh, could I sleep the livelong winter through !
Waking, I mourn because he reigns so long.
But May will drive him from the field again,
And I shall pluck the flowers where lieth now
The icy hoar-frost.”

In reading of the adventures of Hilda and of Gudrun, one sees that the grown-up people in those days were liker to the children of our time than to the older people. They never seemed to get tired of games. They came long distances to be present at them, and went on day after day as eagerly as boys now go on with cricket and football. A second childlike trait in their characters was their love of festal gatherings, and of giving and receiving gifts. One can see that even Wild Hagen loves dearly to get presents, although he does not keep them long. Another point of resemblance between them and children is that they quarrel rather often, but make up their quarrels again suddenly. We hear of

them fighting desperately in deadly strife, but presently some one says a soft word, and the warriors lay down their swords and become friends at once, and sit down and laugh and joke together as if they had never been foes. This is specially true of the heroes in Gudrun, and it is a generous and noble trait in their characters. There is something very beautiful in the picture of Gudrun reconciling so many ancient enemies, and persuading them to bury their hatreds for ever. In these and in later times the long bitter feuds which different families and tribes cherished to one another was one of the chief evils of society. If one man wronged another, and especially if he slew him, the friends of the slain man sought to avenge his death by slaying the slayer. But his friends again retaliated by slaying the slayers, and in this way feuds were handed down from father to son. Nothing was so difficult as to stop a feud once it began. Sir Walter Scott wrote of these feuds in his "Lay of the Last Minstrel:"—

"Can piety the discord heal,
Or stanch the death-feud's enmity?
Can Christian love, can patriot zeal,
Can love of blessed charity?"

The prevalence of this evil habit of cherishing hatred from generation to generation makes the reconciling act of Gudrun all the more beautiful. She had been the greatest sufferer, but she forgets her wrongs, and pleads with her mother and with stern old Wate not to cherish

hatred for ever. In this respect Gudrun is better and more Christian in her spirit than the ladies of the *Nibelungenlied*. Even the gentlest and most lovely of them, *Criemhild*, becomes terrible when she is wronged, and the poem, which begins with sweet pictures of love and happiness, ends with a bath of blood and terrible vengeance. It has been said that in the one poem we pass from joy to sorrow, but in the other, after many troubles, we reach joy and peace at last. The following is a specimen of Gudrun in the old German original:—

“Ez was in einer vasten umb’ einen mitten tach.
Ein vogel kom geflozen. Kûdrûn dô sprach :
‘owê, vogel schæne, du erbarmest mir so sêre,
daz du sô vil gefluizest ûf disem fluote,’ sprach diu maget hêre.

“In menschlicher stimme antwurten ir began
der gotes engel hêre, sam ez wære ein man :
‘ich bin ein bote dir von gote ; und kanst du mich gefragen,
vil hêre maget edele, so sage ich dir von allen dînen mâgen.’”

Simrock renders the passage into modern German as follows:—

“Es war in den Fasten und um den mitten Tag,
Ein Vogel kam geschwommen : nun hört wie Gudrun sprach :
‘O weh, schöner Vogel, du must mich auch erbarmen,
Dass du einher geschwommen kommst auf diesen Fluten,’ sprach
die Arme.

“In menschlicher Stimme zu antworten begann
Der hehre Gottesvogel als wär es ein Mann.
‘Ich bin ein Bote Christi, und willst du mich fragen,
Hehres Mägdlein edel, so will ich dir von deinen Freunden
sagen.’”

II.

The original of the story of Beowulf is to be found in an Anglo-Saxon poem of the eighth century. Although written by an Englishman, or at all events written in the language spoken in England, the poem does not speak of England, nor does it celebrate the deeds of Englishmen. The scene of the first part is laid in the land of the Scyldings or Danes, by which we are probably to understand a land on the shores of Schleswig. The scene of the second part of the poem is Gothland, or the land of the Geatas, that is, the southern part of Sweden.

But why did an English poet write about people so far distant as Danes and Swedes? One would have expected that he would rather have written about people nearer home, or if he did write about the deeds of men far away, he would have changed the names of the places and persons, and represented them as English; for this we know was a common fashion among ancient poets. We cannot answer the question with any certainty, but a suggestion has been made by an English scholar which is so pretty, and also so likely, that I think most people will be disposed to accept it as true. The scholar I mean is Mr. Thomas Arnold, who published some years ago a learned edition of Beowulf, and who

has done much to make the old poem intelligible. He reminds us in his introduction that at the time when *Beowulf* was written many Englishmen took a deep interest in the dwellers on the shores of the northern seas. The reason of this interest was that the English were Christians, but the men of the north were still heathens, and the Christians of England felt for them a deep pity, and wished to preach to them the Gospel of Christ. They longed to see them worshipping Christ and living in peace and love, rather than serving the stern old gods whose worship made them love war and bloodshed. The consequence of this was that many missionaries went forth from the British Isles to various parts of Germany and Holland. These missionaries had of course to learn the language of the people to whom they went, and perhaps some of them felt an interest in their customs and old traditions. Modern missionaries have often preserved the old tales and traditions of the peoples among whom they went to preach.

Now it is quite evident that the poet of *Beowulf* was a Christian, and probably a Christian priest. It is evident, too, that he is telling a tale that did not happen in his own day, but that comes from the olden time; and he says expressly that the kings and peoples he writes about were not Christians but pagans.

Mr. Arnold reminds us that in the year 695 the English missionary St. Willibrord, who was labouring

among the Frisians, made a missionary journey into Denmark. His object was to persuade the King of the Danes to embrace Christianity. He failed in the chief end of his mission, for the heathen king refused to forsake the faith of his fathers; but he was kind to the missionary, and he even permitted him to take away with him thirty young Danes. These young men Willibrord intended to bring up as Christians, and then to send them back as missionaries into their own land. Mr. Arnold's suggestion is that through these young men the old Danish stories may have found their way to England, and been done into Anglo-Saxon by an English priest. It is a very happy conjecture.

Another question suggests itself in considering the origin of Beowulf. Were the old Danish legends which the Anglo-Saxon priest rendered into his own tongue pure fictions, and were the personages creatures of imagination, or were they in part, at least, histories, and did the people he speaks about ever live? Authentic history tells us nothing of Beowulf himself, but we find one reference in the poem to a man who was certainly an historical character. The French Bishop Gregory of Tours, who lived in the sixth century, and wrote a history of the Franks, tells a story in his history in which we recognise one of the episodes in Beowulf. He says that the Danes under their King Chochilaicus made a descent in their ships upon Gaul, and laid waste a part of the land. Having accomplished this, the King

Chochilaicus ordered the booty and the captives to be placed in the ships, and to sail away, but he and a part of his army remained behind until these ships gained the high seas. Meanwhile, however, it came to the ears of the King of the Franks, Theuderik, that Chochilaicus had laid waste his land, and Theuderik sent his son Theudebert with a great army to chastise the invaders. He quickly appeared upon the scene, and attacked the army and the fleet of the Danes, recovered the booty, and slew King Chochilaicus.

There is little doubt that the Chochilaicus mentioned by Gregory of Tours is just Hygelac turned into Latin, and that the expedition of which Gregory of Tours speaks is the same of which we have mention in *Beowulf*.¹

If *Beowulf* was a real personage, he was in all probability a follower, and possibly a successor, of Hygelac or Chochilaicus, who contrived to make his escape from the Franks, and whose daring deeds made such an impression upon the minds of his fellow-countrymen that he became a hero of their songs.

Some writers are of opinion that *Beowulf* never had any existence, and that he is simply a personage called into existence by the imagination of a poet. According to these writers, *Beowulf* and his deeds were invented by the poet to exhibit in a poetical way the great benefits which cultivation and good husbandry had conferred

¹ Page 158.

upon the northern lands. Grendel and his mother, who lurk at the bottom of deep streams, and wander among the fens surrounded by fogs and darkness, are the representatives of the destructive forces of nature. They represent the thick mists, and especially the overflowing flood which rises suddenly and sweeps away sleeping men. Beowulf, or Beow, again represents the god of husbandry, who teaches men how to overcome these enemies of their comfort and safety.

It is not impossible that Beowulf was a real personage, but that in his exploits, as recorded by the poets, there is a poetical representation of the triumphs of cultivation. This blending of history with fancy, this combination of a god and a man into one person, is by no means uncommon in the early poems of nations.

There is not a little that is touching and beautiful in the poem of Beowulf. The good white-headed King Hrothgar, who cared so tenderly for his people, and was bowed with grief when ill befell them, is a fair picture. A still nobler character is Beowulf, so chivalrous and heroic, and yet so humble and gentle. He will not arm himself with a sword because Grendel has none, and he does not tell that the sword Hunferth lent him failed, lest it should hurt the feelings of his former envious rival.

We see from Beowulf, as from the other stories in this book, on what friendly and familiar terms the Kings and their men lived. They were all brothers in arms,

and the idea that the King should place himself apart from his men at a distance so remote as to be unapproachable, never entered into the minds of the frank brave Kings of the north.

We see in Roland also that even the great and wise Charles took counsel with his knights, and was greatly guided by their words.

When later European Kings placed themselves above law, above their parliaments, and despised the wishes of their people, claiming to be themselves the State, having power to do what they pleased, they were certainly not treading in the footsteps of the brave Kings of the north. They were rather imitators of the evil Emperors of imperial Rome, who borrowed their despotic ideas from the cruel tyrants of the patient and long-suffering people of the East.

There is little doubt that the author of Beowulf was a priest. We mean the writer who put it together in its present form, for the original poem was the work of the old bards. The priest who gave its last shape to Beowulf was evidently a good and kindly man. He laments that the heroes of whom he was writing were still ignorant of the true God, and knew nothing about the life to come. But he always speaks kindly of them, and dwells with obvious satisfaction on their brave deeds, their loyalty to their Kings and to one another. He was to an unusual degree a charitable and gentle ecclesiastic, who loved

to praise good men and good deeds wherever he found them.

III.

The "Song of Roland," which is the most famous and beautiful of the *Chansons de geste* of France, was written in the eleventh or twelfth century. But it is a song of the deeds of men who lived much earlier. The Charles of whom it speaks is the Charlemagne of history, perhaps the greatest king who ever ruled in Europe; we might almost say he ruled over Europe, so wide was his European empire. Roland, too, is an historical character, and although we do not know much about him, it is interesting to read even the meagre notice by the historian of one whom legend and song have made so famous.

Eginhard, the historian of Charles the Great, writes that in the year 777 the Emperor Charles held a great assembly at Paderborn. There came to this assembly not only barons from all parts of Germany and France, but a certain Saracen named Abn-el-Arabi, and other Saracens with him. He was the governor of Saragossa, but he invited Charles to cross the Pyrenees, and offered to deliver up to him Saragossa and the other cities. The reason of this offer was that another Saracen prince, Abderahman, was subduing all Spain to his own power. Charles thought that the quarrel between the

Saracen princes presented to him a favourable opportunity. He collected a great army, and in the spring of the next year he crossed the Pyrenees. He then passed through the valley of Roncesvalles, and laid siege to Pampeluna, which he took. Afterwards he laid siege to Saragossa, but was not able to take it. It is said, however, that the Saracens offered him great gifts if he would retire from Spain. He accepted the gifts, and marched homewards; but when marching through the passes of the Pyrenees a great disaster befell his army. The wild tribes of the mountains, the Basques or Gascons, fell suddenly upon his rearguard and utterly destroyed it. Many of the most trusted courtiers of Charles perished in this disastrous fight, but three are selected by the historian for special notice, of which one is "Roland, prefect of the march of Brittany."¹ This is really all history tells of the famous Roland; but although historians soon forgot Roland, poets continued to sing his praise, and an innumerable number of songs were made about him. Especially did poets sing of his tragic death in the passes of Roncesvalles. We may be sure that he was a brave man, and it is certain too that he possessed the power of winning the hearts of men, and making himself beloved. Otherwise poets would hardly have continued to sing of him as they did.

¹ "In quo prælio Eggihardus regiæ mensæ præpositus, Anselmus comes palatii, et Hruodlandus Brittanici limitis præfectus, cum aliis compluribus interficiuntur."—*Einhardi Vita Karoli M.*

Many of the earlier songs about Roland have been lost. That which we now have was for long as good as lost. The most learned French scholars did not know of its existence. About the beginning of this century some English scholars discovered that there existed among the MSS. of the Bodleian Library in Oxford what seemed to them a fine old French poem, and some specimens were published. The French became interested in it, and at length the famous French statesman M. Guizot sent over a scholar, M. Francisque Michel, to see it, and to make a copy of the poem. This he did, and it was published to the world in 1837. Since then it has been published many times, and it has been translated into many languages. The manuscript in the Bodleian is small and shabby. It is supposed to have been a pocket copy of the song which one of the *jongleurs*, or travelling minstrels, carried with him to refresh his memory.

The *jongleur* was a very important person in the middle ages. The name is derived from the Latin word *joculator*, and our words *jocular* and *juggler* are connected with the same root. In many cases, especially in latter times, the *jongleur* was nothing better than a jester or mountebank who went about the villages to amuse the people. But some of the *jongleurs* were of a higher order. They were often men of birth, although poor, who had the gift not only of reciting the tales of others, but of themselves turning tales into verse, and

they were as proud of their profession as a modern poet or artist is of his.

The language in which the "Chanson de Roland" is written is French, not, of course, the French which is spoken in France now, but the French which was spoken in the north and centre of France in the twelfth century. It was called the *langue d'oïl*, as distinguished from the *langue d'oc*, the language spoken in the south of France. In order to give our readers an idea of the language, we shall quote a verse of the poem, first in the original, and then in the modern French translation of M. Leon Gautier:—

"Carles li reis, nostre emperere magnes,
Set anz tuz pleins ad estel en Espaigne :
Tresqu'en la mer cunquist la tere altaigne.
N'i ad castel ki devant lui remaignet ;
Murs ne citel n'i est remés à fraindre
Fors Sarraguce, k'est en une muntaigne.
Li reis Marsilies la tient, ki Deu nen aimet ;
Mahummet sert e Apollin recleimet :
Ne s'poet garder que mals ne li ateignet."

The following is the same in the modern French version of M. Leon Gautier :—

"Charles le Roi, notre grand empereur,
Sept ans entiers est resté en Espagne :
Jusqu'à la mer, il a conquis la haute terre.
Pas de château qui tenne devant lui,
Pas de cite ni de mur qui reste encore debout
Hors Saragosse, qui est sur une montagne.
Le roi Marsil la tient, Masile qui n'aime pas Dieu,
Qui sert Mahomet et prie Apollon ;
Mais le malheur va l'attendre ; il ne s'en peut garder.

The metre of the "Chanson de Roland" is decasyllabic, and it is divided into stanzas which are of unequal length. Each stanza has the same rhyme throughout. We should not now count the system of rhyming good. It is what is called assonant or vowel rhyme. The vowels rhyme together, but the consonants do not of necessity. For instance, in the stanza we have quoted, *fraindre* rhymes with *muntaigne*, and *reclimet* with *ateignet*.

The fame of Roland as a hero of legend has been marvellous. The poem speaks of the many countries he went through when living as the soldier of Charles, but the dead Roland has gone through many more lands. In Germany and in Holland, in England and in Italy, and even in Spain his deeds were sung by the minstrels of the time, every one in his own tongue.

Roland was held in great honour even by the Church of the middle ages, and he was spoken of as a saint, although this title has not been continued him by the modern Church of Rome. That he died fighting against the pagans constituted his claim to this name in the estimation of the men of these times.

We have said that the "Chanson de Roland" was forgotten and lost, but it would be wrong to suppose that the deeds of Roland and his heroic death were entirely forgotten by poets, and even by historians. Sir Walter Scott alludes to it in "Marmion" when he writes—

“Oh for a blast of that dread horn
On Fontarabian echoes borne,
That to King Charles did come
When Roland brave and Olivier,
And every Paladin and peer,
On Roncesvalles died!”

The story of Roland has a very interesting and early connection with English history. According to the old chroniclers and poets, it was sung by a minstrel before the English and Norman armies joined battle on the great day of Hastings. We give the story in the words of Mr. Freeman, the historian of the Norman Conquest :—

“Before the two armies met hand to hand, a juggler or minstrel known as *Taillefer*, the Cleaver of Iron, rode forth from the Norman ranks as if to defy the whole force in his single person. He craved and obtained the Duke’s leave to strike the first blow ; he rode forth, singing songs of Roland and Charlemagne—so soon had the name and exploits of the great German become the spoil of the enemy. He threw his sword into the air and caught it again ; but he presently showed that he could use his warlike weapons for other purposes than for jugglers’ tricks of this kind ; he pierced one Englishman with his lance, and he struck down another with his sword, and then himself fell beneath the blows of their comrades.”¹

Even at the end of the eighteenth century, a period in

¹ The History of the Norman Conquest of England. By Edward A. Freeman, M.A. Vol. iii. Oxford, 1869.

European history which had little sympathy with loyal knights and conquering monarchs, the French did not forget Roland. Rouget de Lisle, the young French officer who wrote the famous *Marseillaise* which gave expression to the spirit of the first French Revolution, wrote a song on Roland at Roncesvalles. The following is one of the verses. Roland is speaking :—

“ Suivez mon panache éclatant,
Français, ainsi que ma bannière ;
Qu’il soit le point de ralliement ;
Vous savez tous quel prix attend
Le brave qui dans la carrière
Marche sur les pas de Roland.
Mourons pour la patrie
L’est le sort le plus beau, le plus digne d’envie.”

Since the rediscovery of the ancient manuscripts of the “Chanson de Roland” it has excited an extraordinary amount of interest in Europe, but especially in France. It had often been said that Frenchmen have no genius for epic poetry. Greece and Rome, Italy, England, and Germany, have all produced epic poems of the first order ; but France, seldom behind in any form either of enterprise or of literary achievement, was here decidedly behind. But since Roland was discovered, French critics have been wont to say that it is no longer true that France has no great epic, it has the “Chanson de Roland.”

Frenchmen love the “Chanson de Roland” and its hero, because they say they find in him an embodiment of

their own national character. The nobility and beauty, as well as some of the defects, as they admit, of that character are reflected in the brave, chivalrous, but somewhat rash and unreasonable Roland. The refusal to blow his horn to summon aid when fearful odds were coming up against him must be pronounced foolish, and an officer who acted so in modern warfare would be severely dealt with. But the French, and indeed the English too, love daring deeds, and forgive easily a brave man, even when he is guilty of a sublime folly. There is in the French history of the last century an action which supplies us with a modern parallel to the deed of Roland. On the 1st of June 1789—"the glorious 1st of June" it used to be called in England—our Channel fleet, under the command of Lord Howe, engaged the fleet of France. The English gained a complete victory, but one French ship called the *Vengeur*, although reduced to a mere hulk, refused to surrender, although repeatedly summoned to do so, and at length it sank in the waves, the entire crew shouting aloud, "Vive la République!" The French found much consolation in their defeat in this act of stubborn daring, and the National Convention ordered that a model of the *Vengeur* should be hung up in the Pantheon. The entire French people showed a similar spirit of rash valour when in the late war between them and the Germans they continued to resist the victorious invader long after there was any reasonable hope of success.

Roland represents in his person more than the French people. He is a representative hero of chivalry—the valiant graceful knight who was the ideal of the middle ages. There is much that is very beautiful in the Roland of the *chanson*. He is a true and tender friend. He is not ashamed to shed tears; nor does Charles, the stern old King, himself restrain his tears when he sees his beloved Roland dead. This is a trait of the character of the knights in the *chanson* which is remote from modern ideas, for a soldier now is rarely to be seen shedding tears. In Roland and in the other knights of the *chanson* there is much simple piety. They believe in God, and look forward to Paradise; but it must be confessed that their knowledge of the Christian religion is very imperfect. The Christian religion teaches us to act justly and kindly towards all men, and to love even our enemies. The knights in the *chanson* never think of bestowing a kind thought or kind deed on their enemies. They hate them with all their hearts, and they evidently think that God in heaven shares in their hatred towards their heathen enemies. In the *chanson* it is said that Charles compelled the heathen in the captured city to accept baptism on pain of death. This is not a mere poet's fancy, but an historical fact. The great King acted in this way towards the Saxons. He did not understand that this was an illegitimate mode of propagating the religion of Christ. Men cannot be made to change their thoughts by force;

and such a mode of procedure was fitted to make the heathen hate rather than love the Christian religion. We can see that the Christianity of Charles bore much resemblance to the heathenism which it had supplanted. Charles and his knights looked upon God as partial, a respecter of persons, not as the "God of the spirits of all flesh." This was the idea which the heathen had of their gods, whom they endowed with the pride, jealousy, and evil passions of men. Charles and his knights, according to the *chanson*, did not rise to a much higher conception of their Christian God.

The only person in the *chanson* who was converted to the faith in a becoming manner was the Queen of Marsile. She first listened to the homilies of the bishops, and was not baptized until she expressed her willingness to receive the rite. This privilege was accorded to her because she was a lady of rank. In this incident we see another of the faults of the times in which the *chanson* was written. The men of that age were tender, generous, and courteous to those of their own order, but they were often cruel and discourteous to those who occupied a lower position in society. This was a special fault of the times which are called feudal. In the earlier days even the kings did not venture to treat those below them with cruelty and oppression; but when castles were built, and the barons were at the head of armed retainers, they trampled upon the peasants, and treated them as if they did not belong to

the same race. They considered that they were entitled to no privileges, and were angry when they claimed the common rights of men.

This sentiment on the part of the privileged classes, that the world and all things in it belonged to them, bore evil fruit in the after history of Europe. The peasant wars of which we read in the days of the Reformation, the revolutions which shook European society to its foundation, had all their origin in the usurpation of the common rights of mankind by a powerful minority. The struggle between the usurpers and those who have been wronged is still going on in Europe, and will continue to go on until a better spirit gains the ascendancy, and men learn that their true glory and happiness is to be found not in securing a larger share of this world's goods than they are entitled to, but in seeking for themselves no more than what is just, and in according the same to others. It is sometimes good for people to see caricatures of themselves and of their own doings. The caricature brings out the special faults and peculiarities with much greater plainness than a faithful portrait. But by that very plainness it gains in impressiveness; and as men are always slow to recognise their own faults and frailties, the exaggeration of caricature is often needed in order to bring their faults home to them. The history of the middle ages is such a caricature of our times. In it we see the religious intolerance, the political and social

injustices of the modern world expressed with a frankness with which they would not be avowed now. But the spirit of religious intolerance is ever the same, although it may disguise itself more in one age than in another. It is the same with the spirit which claims for itself superior privileges, and in order to do so robs another man of his. The feudal knight did not disguise that he regarded the peasant as of no more value than his horse. In modern times no man would venture to express himself with such brutal frankness, but how many do consider the lives of men of much less importance than the preservation of privileges and of property !

IV.

The poem of Walter and Hildegund should have stood earlier in the volume, had we followed a strictly chronological arrangement. It belongs to the tenth century. It was written by a monk of St. Gall in Switzerland, and in Latin. This monk has described the deeds of an old Gothic hero in the verse and manner in which Virgil described the deeds of Æneas and Turnus. Educated Germans were at this time half ashamed of their mother tongue, and thought nothing sounded grand until it had been turned into sonorous Latin. The priests used Latin in Divine service, it was taught in the schools, used in legal documents, and at the courts of em-

perors and high nobles it was employed both for conversation and writing. Of course they talked German too, but most thought it much finer to talk Latin. Thus we find one statesman of this age writing, "The Argentiensian city, which is rustically called Strassburg." And another speaks of "the city of Herbipolis, which is called Wirtzburg by rustics."

The probability is that the monk of St. Gall who told the story of Walter in Virgilian hexameters had before him an old German poem which is now lost. We can easily recognise through the Roman disguises the ways and the sayings of the heroes which we have learned to know in the "Nibelungenlied" and in "Gudrun." A German writer has said of Walter: "This favourite book of the Benedictines of St. Gall had without doubt an old German and heroic poem as its predecessor. The rough and simple power of the German heroic age shines through the verses of the monk. In spite of its foreign form, Walter has more of an ancient German complexion than any of the later German poems, not excepting the 'Nibelungenlied.' It is true that the Latin poet, as he has imitated the speech of Virgil, has to some extent given his hero an antique costume. He speaks of horse-tails on the helmets, of poisoned arrows, of seven-fold shields. Like Homer and Virgil, he makes the vanquished beg for life, which is contrary to the laughing contempt for death displayed by the Germans. But the imitation of classical models for the most part affects

the poem in externals alone. The spirit of it is genuinely German, and Walter, with his Virgilian oratory, looks like a German of the time of the barbarian invasion adorned with some spoils of Rome.”¹

The Etzel of whom mention is made in the poem of Walter is the famous Attila of history; and although I have called him by his German name Etzel, he is called Attila in the original Latin poem. It will perhaps appear strange to some readers that so many brave German kings should fall into a panic and offer tribute and hostages as soon as they hear of Attila's approach, without striking a single blow for their freedom. But the poet's picture is true to history. Never did any invader strike such terror in Europe as Attila, whom men named “the Scourge of God.” The very appearance of Attila and his Huns terrified the inhabitants of Europe. They came from the East, and their speech, their arms, and their ways of fighting startled and terrified Europeans. An ancient writer, when speaking of their victories, says: “They derived an unfair advantage from the hideousness of their faces. Nations whom they would never have conquered in fair fight fled horrified from those frightful—faces I can hardly call them, but rather shapeless black collops of flesh, with little points instead of eyes.”

¹ Waltharius lateinisches Gedicht des zehnten Jahrhunderts. Mit deutscher Uebertragung von Joseph Victor Scheffel. Stuttgart, 1874.

The whole ways and habits of the Huns caused them to be regarded with horror by Europeans, who shrank from all contact with them. We read in the poem how reluctant Hagen and Walter were to remain among them, notwithstanding the consideration with which they were treated; and Hildegund desired rather to die by Walter's sword than to fall a second time into the hands of the Huns. This may be illustrated by a real incident which took place when Attila was besieging Aquileia in Italy. There was a Roman lady named Digna, we are told, who had a house on the walls of the city. Beside her house was a tower which looked into the waters of Natiso. She watched the progress of the siege, and when she saw that the city was about to fall into the hands of the Huns, she ascended the tower, and covering her head, she plunged into the stream below.

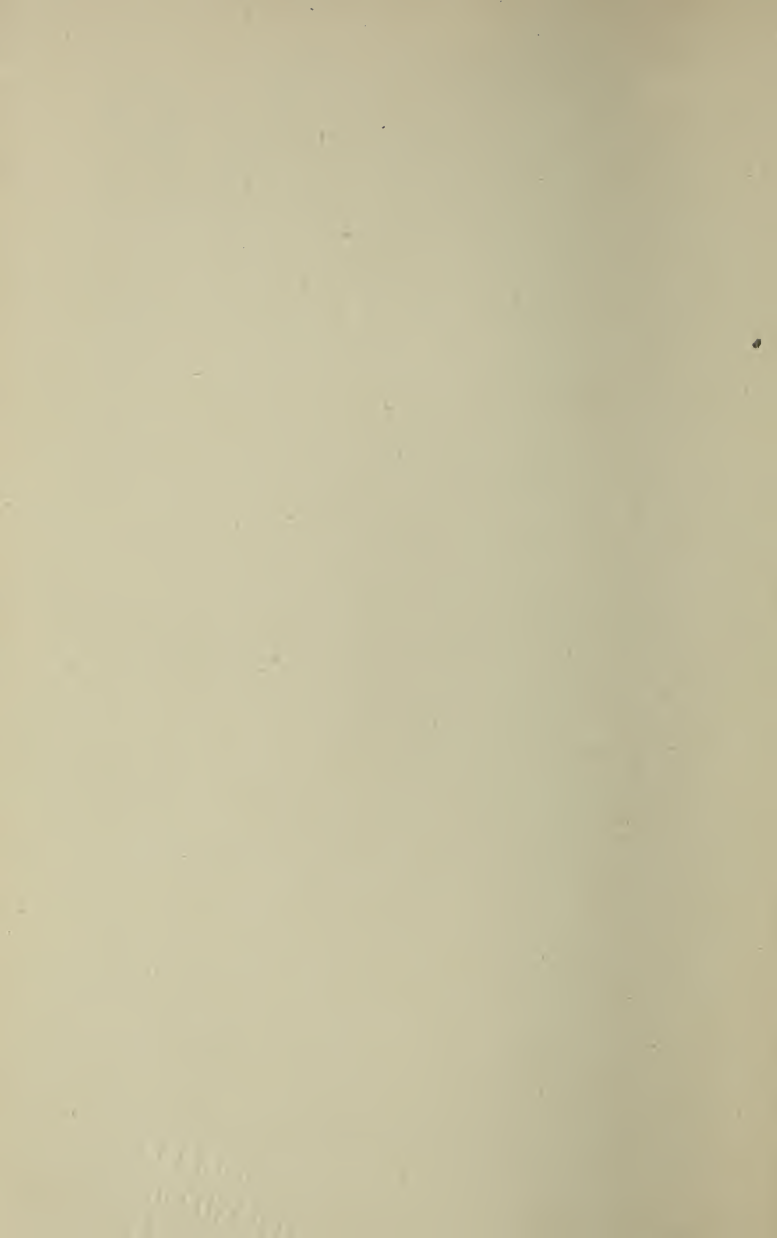
The poem of Walter shows us the love which the German kings and princes had acquired for gold and money. The picture it gives of the kings and queens themselves handling the gold and keeping the keys of the treasuries is quite historical. We read in Gregory of Tours how one of the Merovingian kings was stabbed whilst stooping over his strong-box to take out with his own hand the treasures it contained.

The bright and pretty things, and especially the yellow gold, which the northern nation found in the cities and palaces of the south exercised a maddening fascination upon them; and it led to many sad quarrels. Both

Walter and Gunther were evidently fond of gold. In the "Nibelungenlied" we have a still more striking instance of the baleful influence of the precious hoard for which so many lives were sacrificed.

The poem of Walter has been translated into German by Simrock, the great master of the legendary poetry and lore of Germany. He has endeavoured to restore to it its ancient German spirit, of which the monk of St. Gall had to some small extent robbed it. We have usually followed his version rather than the Latin when they differ. The following is a specimen of the Latin version of the monk of St. Gall:—

"Dixit, et ecce viam vallo præmuniit artam
Undique præcisis spinis simul et paliuris.
Quo facto ad truncos sese convertit amaro
Cum gemitu, et cuicumque suum caput applicat atque,
Contra orientalem prostratus corpore partem,
Ac nudum retinens ensen hac voce precatur :
'Rerum factori, sed et omnia facta regenti,
Nil sine permissu cujus vel defendi iniquis
Hostilis turmæ telis, nec non quoque probris.
Deprecor ad dominum contrita mente
Benignum, ut qui peccantes non vult sed perdere culpas,
Hos in cæleste prestet mihi sede videri.'"



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
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